

Becoming and Remaining an Activist: A Qualitative Study of Animal and Disability
Rights Activism among Older Youth

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Abstract

Drawing on past research findings, this qualitative research study explored seven early childhood (i.e., distal) and current (i.e., proximal) factors self-reported by older youth as being important in shaping their personal life course toward becoming and remaining involved in the animal rights movement: 1) education, 2) gender, 3) lifestyle, 4) parental involvement, 5) first event, 6) empathy, and 7) collective identity. This research study also adopted a comparative lens and explored the similarities and differences in responses between older youth who engaged in animal and dis/ability rights activism. In-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with six animal rights activists and six dis/ability rights activists ranging in age from 21 – 30 years and Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Model of Human Development was applied. The qualitative research findings revealed that in terms of distal factors that are associated with becoming an animal rights activist the participants reported that education, gender, first events, parental involvement, lifestyle, and empathy were all significant factors. Proximally, the participants reported that education, lifestyle, empathy, and collective identity were significant factors associated with remaining an animal rights activist. The comparative analyses revealed the following five factors as relevant to understanding engagement in animal versus dis/ability rights activism: collective identity, first event, parental involvement, empathy, and gender. Unexpected themes were also revealed that help to explain some of the current challenges (i.e., problems within the movement) and benefits (i.e., intersectionality) that participants experience in the animal rights movement.

Keywords: animal activism, disability rights, Bronfenbrenner, distal and proximal influences, qualitative

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Why do some young people alter their lifestyle to improve their own well-being and/or the well-being of others through participation in activist causes? When seeking to answer such questions about human behaviour, economists and sociologists differ in the prominence given to self-interest (i.e., the degree to which one cares for one's own well-being at the potential expense of others; Fehr & Gintis, 2007; Wrong, 1961). Economists tend to assume that individuals are self-preserving and rational, whereas sociologists emphasize the importance of social norms and group interests over individual drives (Camerer, 2003; Kocher, Cherry, Kroll, Netzer, & Sutter, 2008). Social scientists have attempted to resolve this debate by turning to empirical research to explain why self-interest is important, as the often-differing ideologies of social scientists do not fully explore the scope of human self-interest (Camerer, 2003; Fehr & Gintis, 2007; Kocher, Cherry, Kroll, Netzer, & Sutter, 2008).

Large bodies of social science research in recent years have examined motivational factors for why some humans act for a greater good (Boz & Palaz, 2007; Bueno-Guerra, Leiva, Colell, & Call, 2016; Engel, 2011; Falk & Fischbacher, 2006; Fehr & Schmidt, 1999; Nicoleta, 2016). Although several motivational factors have been discussed in the literature, “reciprocal fairness” (Falk & Fischbacher, 2006) and “inequity aversion” (Fehr & Schmidt, 1999) are two factors relevant to this study that are grounded in empirical research. Those who are thought to act out of “reciprocal fairness” are motivated to respond to positive acts in a positive way, and are motivated to respond to negative acts in a negative way. More importantly, individuals who are thought to be “inequity averse” often implement changes that help resist inequity and inequality (Fehr & Gintis, 2007).

Researchers have identified a relationship between people who are inequity averse and a desire to create change through their participation in social movements (Bobel, 2007); this factor may begin to explain why some people are driven to act in self-interest, whereas others are driven to act for a social interest (i.e., changes are made to benefit society; Adler, 1964; Engel, 2011; Yee, Stevens, & Schulz, 2016).

Researchers and social movement theorists define activism in different ways; for example, Oliver and Marwell (1992) define activists as people who, “care enough about some issue that they are prepared to incur significant costs and act to achieve their goals” (p. 252). Activism, in the current study, has been defined as pursuing political and social change through campaigns designed to modify current political or social policy (Bobel, 2007). Since activism can encompass different campaigns, issues, and activities (e.g., education, protesting, leafleting), a broader and inclusionary definition has been adopted in the current study. Further, the definition of activism used in the current study fits the numerous ways that today’s older youth may participate in social movements, as they may not have the means to participate in common forms of activism (e.g., lobbying, picketing, boycotting).

When trying to understand youth social activism, it is important to consider that youth (as compared with adults) often do not have as many opportunities to be part of a decision-making process. For example, youth are not able to hold formal seats in the government, or they may not have the necessary resources available to participate (Checkoway et al., 2003). However, young people do participate in social interest campaigns, which require them to reflect on the environment around them and engage in complex moral reasoning (Checkoway, et al., 2003; Fischer & Bidell, 1997; Kirshner,

2007). Specifically, for youth to decide to engage in activist causes they must be able to understand when a perceived injustice has occurred, to think critically about the implications, and be motivated to effect change (Bennet, 2014; Bennett & Shapiro, 2013).

Youth engagement in social activism is varied (Bobel 2007; Flanagan & Levine, 2010; Herzog, 1993). Older youth engagement in activist causes can reframe personal problems into political issues that can be shared by a community, and can provide challenging leadership roles and personal support that often is not found in formal political participation (i.e., normative forms of civic engagement such as voting, joining political parties, and advocacy work with elected officials; Flanagan & Levine, 2010; Hart & Kirshner, 2009). For example, social media outlets such as Facebook and Twitter are replete with examples of social and political outrage expressed from youth who are attempting to share perceived injustices with a large demographic of people. In 2011, students protested tuition increases in the United Kingdom, Ana Hazare inspired millions of people in India to protest the government, and a mass social outrage occurred online about the murder of Cecil the lion in Zimbabwe (Herzog, 2016; Huish, 2013). Most recently, global protest of the fatal shooting of Harambe (an endangered western lowland gorilla) after a child had fallen into the gorilla pit at the Cincinnati Zoo has sparked controversy. One can see from these such types of protests that activism becomes an important catalyst for social change; the youth protests discussed above led to meaningful discussion and an eventual change to current policy. It is important to consider the impact of youth activism to better understand the broader impact of social movements on creating societal change.

In the current study, qualitative semi-structured interviews were completed with older youth activists (6 animal and 6 dis/ability rights) who self-reported being an activist for a period of at least six months. Since life experiences tend to not be quantifiable (Patton, 1990), conducting in-depth semi-structured interviews with older youth allowed for rich, meaningful conversation. The purpose was to explore some of the early childhood (i.e., distal) and current (i.e., proximal) influences (not causally, but rather descriptively) that older youth perceive to be important in shaping their personal life course toward becoming and remaining involved in the animal rights movement. A comparison between animal rights and dis/ability rights activism was also conducted to explore some of the similarities and differences in the self-reported distal and proximal influences. The specific research questions were as follows: 1) What early childhood or distal themes do participants report as being important in influencing them to become involved in the animal rights movement in the first place? 2) What current or proximal themes do participants report as being important in influencing them to remain involved in the animal rights movement? 3) Are there similarities and differences in these distal and proximal themes between animal rights and dis/ability rights older youth activists?

Extant research suggests seven themes that have influenced participation in the animal rights movement: 1) education, 2) gender, 3) lifestyle, 4) parental involvement, 5) first event, 6) empathy, and 7) collective identity. Bronfenbrenner's theory of the Bioecological Model of Human Development (i.e., PPCT model) was chosen as the theoretical framework to conceptualize and understand how these seven themes in two distinct time periods might shape becoming and remaining an activist among older youth. Retrospective reports of early childhood influences were chosen as the first time period as

Bronfenbrenner's model highlighted the significance of early environmental influences on future behaviour (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006); further, past animal rights related research proposes that this is a critical time for learning about, and becoming interested in, animal welfare (Herzog, 1993; Pallotta, 2005). Current influences were explored as the second time period as older youth experience additional brain development that allows better articulation of complex cognitive thoughts and how these thoughts are shaped by experiences (Kolb et al., 2012). The application of Bronfenbrenner's theory can allow for a unique contribution by helping researchers explain that at different times throughout the lifespan, influences that affect the decision to become and remain an activist can change or may remain consistent. This becomes increasingly important as studies suggest that youth are no longer engaging in traditional forms of political participation. In addition to engaging in the political arena, young people are now using other methods (e.g., protesting) beyond engagement in parliamentary politics to express their concerns (Coe, Goicolea, & Ohman, 2013; Flanagan & Levine, 2010; Nygreen, Kwon, & Sanchez, 2006).

Literature Review

What is the deal with Animal Rights Activism?

For it has too often been the case that those people lacking power have been derogated by likening them to “animals”. To be likened to an animal in our culture is to be diminished, or to be mindlessly out of control, and who wants to be like that?

- Birke (1994, p. 10)

To truly understand the importance of animal rights activism, one must understand the implications of being likened to an animal. In the quotation above, Birke (1994) enlightened her audience by debating the abhorrent way people are treated when relegated to “animal status”; for example, military tactics, which are still used today, encourage referring to the “enemy” as an animal to dehumanize and legitimize atrocious acts of war. Freeman (2015) discusses that people rarely explain why human rights are worth advocating for or why people should care about other human beings. In education, teaching young children why it is necessary to treat humans with dignity and respect is something that comes easily (at least at its ideological core).

However, convincing people that the same is true of animal rights is not an easy task. In fact, to persuade people that animal species are worthy of protection, one must establish why animal species matter. For many, anthropocentric (i.e., human centered) justifications help people to understand why animals are worth protecting (Melson, 2009, 2009, 2014; Ruckert, 2016); humans need clean air, water, and food and the environment and animals (such as bees and earthworms) readily allow access to these resources. From an economic perspective (also anthropocentric), humans can justify that some domesticated and wild animals help support the industry and help to sustain human life (e.g., horses, service animals; Hall, 2010). The problem with these two perspectives is that

they ignore the most important aspect of animal welfare: caring about animals based on their intrinsic value (i.e., biocentric perspective, non-human centered; Severson & Kahn, 2010).

The beginning of the animal rights movement – previously known as the animal liberation movement – can be traced back to the publication in 1975 of *Animal Liberation* by Peter Singer, a utilitarian philosopher (Pallotta, 2005). *Animal Liberation* is one of the first books in history to describe the horrors associated with intensive factory farming and animal research, and its publication led to public shock and action (Finsen & Finsen, 1994). Philosophers and historians alike have produced most of the literature in the animal rights movement since its inception in the 1980s (Regan, 1983; Singer, 1975). It has only been in the last couple of decades that society has come to seriously entertain the idea that animals should have rights similar or identical to a human being (Herzog, 1993; Herzog & Golden, 2009; Groves, 1995).

Despite the strides made in advocacy over recent years, animal rights activism is still a controversial and marginalized topic. Animal advocacy seeks to mitigate, and in some cases end, animal exploitation, which includes humans' tendency to assume that animals exist for human consumption, and to be owned, bred, and killed (Hall, 2010). This goal of challenging animal exploitation does not just affect humans on an individual level; animal advocacy threatens certain industries that rely heavily on the use of animals (e.g., agribusiness, fishing, captive animal entertainment, scientific experimentation, and fashion; Freeman, 2015, p. 51). Advocacy for greater respect for animals might also threaten the notion of human superiority (Finsen & Finsen, 1994; Rowe, 2009; Schmidt, 2002). Descartes (1649, 1989), for example, stated that animals were distinctly different

from humans, machinelike, and possessed neither mind nor feelings. While academic discourse has progressed from this mind-body dualist perspective, some still believe that humans are cognitively and emotionally superior to animals.

Dominant Western culture continues to define humans (i.e., rational and civil) in hierarchical dualism to animals (i.e., uncivilized and less intelligent or developed). This ideology is so ingrained in our culture that animal metaphors are used in daily life to categorize “otherness” (Rodriguez, 2009, p. 79). According to Nunberg, Sag, and Watson (1994) most metaphors that use animal imagery are negative in their evaluative position and represent an ideological component that is biased towards groups of people, values, and circumstances (Fernando, 1996). By conceptualizing individuals as animals, the individual is ascribed with the traits of the animal; in society, these animal metaphors are used to denigrate women, disabled persons, immigrants, and enemies of war (Rodriquez, 2009). For example, the use of “cow”, “hen”, “bitch”, and “vixen” degrades women using animal imagery; to liken a woman to a cow is to call her fat, obtuse, and lazy. The use of animal imagery and metaphor speaks to the oppression of marginalized people and reinforces human superiority over non-human animals by denying animals any form of humanity (Adams, 1990).

Youth Participation in Animal Activism

Studies have shown that young people in general tend not to engage in political or civic activism through formal means (e.g., through contacting policy makers and members of parliament about important social issues; Coe et al., 2013; Checkoway et al., 2003; Flanagan & Levine, 2010). This change in youth engagement of formal activism has caused policy makers and educators around the globe to express their growing concerns

about the political and civic capacities of youth (Youniss et al., 2002). However, youth do engage in political and civic activism by taking part in social movements, volunteering, and engaging with different organizations (i.e., women's rights, LGBTQ rights, children's rights, etc.; Gambone, Yu, Lewis-Charp, Sipe, & Lacoe, 2006). For example, youth activist groups have worked to improve failing schools, exposed environmental issues, and have persuaded policy makers to cease construction on a juvenile detention facility for at-risk youth (Nygreen, Kwon, & Sanchez, 2006; Larson, Hansen, & Moneta, 2005; Sherman et al., 2002). Further, youth involved in animal rights groups have fought for an end to animal farming, vehemently protested puppy mills, and are currently advocating for the closure of Marineland located in Niagara Falls, Ontario, Canada.

Arguably, unlike other social movements, engaging in the animal rights movement requires that one make a profound change to one's daily living. For example, people may limit communication with friends, family, and potential love interests when they do not share similar values and beliefs, dedicate large amounts of time to the animal rights movement (i.e., through protesting, education, and behind the scenes organization), and adopt a vegetarian or vegan diet. In fact, studies have shown that participation in animal rights activism is a two-stage process, whereby a conversion to an all vegetarian or vegan diet is the first stage of recruitment into the movement, and a shift to political action through participation in a social movement organization is the second stage (Herzog, 1993; Pallotta, 2005). Jasper and Poulsen (1995) found that people who were newly involved in the animal rights movement joined without any pre-existing influence and had no previous activism history. This finding suggests that some people are willing to join the animal rights movement because they already have pre-conceived notions about the treatment of

animals. These pre-existing beliefs are personal opinions that have been shaped by the person's own individual characteristics (e.g., gender, empathy) or through exposure to a unique environment (e.g., education, lifestyle, family influences).

For youth, regularly publicizing their lifestyle choices can be challenging; children from school age to post-secondary education (all considered youth in the context of this study) experience immense peer pressure and a strong drive to "fit in" (Hansson & Jacobsson, 2014). Accordingly, animal rights activism is hard to hide from family and friends, as this significant lifestyle change (i.e., veganism) often makes it unreasonable for older youth activists to keep their beliefs a secret. Compartmentalizing an activist identity can be difficult since every time a person sits down to enjoy a meal their activist beliefs will be fully displayed. People perceive activists as violating social norms to pursue a moral ideal (i.e., a principle, value, or belief that a person actively fights for), and this societal rejection might have a negative impact on young activists (Pallotta, 2005). Although this lifestyle change is extremely difficult, some youth, despite opposition from friends and family, might still resist dominant cultural norms and even attempt to re-socialize themselves with an activist identity.

In conclusion, it is important to understand how youth navigate the complexity of a social issue that is often in opposition with the dominant cultural norms to which they are exposed. Accordingly, this qualitative study adopts an early lifespan approach and draws on the bioecological model of human development (Bronfenbrenner, 1977; as outlined below) to explore some of the early childhood (distal) and current (proximal) influences that older youth perceive to be important in shaping their personal life course toward becoming and remaining involved in the animal rights movement.

Theoretical Framework: Ecological Systems Theory

Social movement theory aims to explain why people feel the need to mobilize against a common collective injustice (e.g., Wall Street Protests, Marineland Protests), to understand what forms social mobilization take (e.g., protesting, social media, education), and to understand the implications of this participation (i.e., political, cultural, and social; Benford, 1997; Benford & Snow, 2000; Maiguashca, 2011). Recently, Klar and Kasser (2009) have begun to consider other theories that were previously thought to be unrelated to social movements. For instance, Erik Erikson's (1950) notion of generativity has been recently applied to the idea of activism and social interest throughout the lifespan (Pratt & Lawford, 2014). Feminist theory, which aims to help understand gender inequality, is now heavily rooted in activism (Collins, 2000; Korn & Kneese, 2015); for example, feminists are protesting and advocating against existing inequalities and gender hierarchies in specific communities (e.g., video game community, campus and university community).

In 1977, Bronfenbrenner developed a theoretical framework that aimed to both expand and converge the naturalistic and experimental approaches to understanding environmental influences on human development. Bronfenbrenner (1977) coined this scientific framework "the ecology of human development" or "ecological systems theory". According to this framework, each ecological environment is specific to each individual in a series of structures.

The first ecological system defined in Bronfenbrenner's theory was the "microsystem". The microsystem includes the relationship between the individual and the environment and considers the immediate setting in which the individual is engaged (i.e., the home, workplace, or school; 1977). Bronfenbrenner expounded upon the setting as a

place that can be defined by specific features (i.e., location, objects in location), certain activities (i.e., running, teaching, playing), and specific roles that define an individual's experiences within those spaces (i.e., athlete, student, teacher, daughter). Additionally, these settings needed to occur for specific periods of time. This suggests that from an early age, influences such as parental involvement in activism, or being exposed to social issues at school (i.e., watching a documentary on racism), impact young individuals in a way that can shape their future involvement in social activism.

The second ecological system in Bronfenbrenner's theory is the "mesosystem", which is comprised of interactions among the settings in the microsystem of the developing individual at certain instances of his or her life. For most people, these interactions among settings generally take place between the family, the peer group, and either the school or the workplace, depending on age. Cultural or religious settings that are specific to certain people are relevant components of the mesosystem (i.e., church, mosque). Bronfenbrenner (1977) emphasized two important aspects of the mesosystem, namely the interactions between the settings and ecological transitions. For young activists, these unique settings (e.g., parent/child interaction, university) may form a cohesive story if considered in tandem with each other, or the interaction between these settings may conflict, thus forcing the young activist to struggle with a conflicting set of beliefs (e.g., if the child's school emphasizes an anti-bullying regime, while in the home setting the child's family makes frequent racist comments). Ecological transitions are also critical in understanding the motivations for participating in activist causes among youth, as each new experience a person faces (i.e., starting school, graduations, marriage, pregnancy, moving, and divorce) can motivate engagement in social activism

(Bronfenbrenner, 1986). Such ecological transitions provide a framework for dealing with developmental changes throughout the lifespan (Goulet & Baltes, 1970). For instance, each experience changes the potential role, activity, and place that is outlined in the microsystem (e.g., student to worker, girlfriend to wife, husband to father), and can influence the effect of the microsystem on a person (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). Furthermore, these transitional changes can also lead to interaction effects between each transition, suggesting a complex and integrated network of environmental influences that works to shape the individual.

The third ecological system in Bronfenbrenner's model is the "exosystem", which further extends the mesosystem. The difference between these two systems is that the exosystem encompasses social structures (both formal and informal; i.e., the media, government, and neighborhood) that do not directly involve the developing individual, but do impact the settings around the person; these social structures can influence a child's surrounding environment and potentially determine what happens to the society in which the child lives (i.e., the government reducing spending on the school the child attends; Bronfenbrenner, 1986). At the level of the exosystem, these indirect effects on the surrounding settings could influence a young person's participation in activism in similar ways that the microsystem and mesosystem could. As a way of providing one example, the government approval of the pig slaughterhouse in Burlington, Ontario is an influence in the exosystem that could have lasting influences on children who grow up in the area.

The final ecological system in Bronfenbrenner's model is the macrosystem, which differs fundamentally from the previous three systems. The macrosystem does not aim to identify the unique ways that everyone's environment shapes development, but rather aims

to explain previously existing patterns of culture and/or subculture that shape structures and activities that directly influence people concurrently (Bronfenbrenner, 1977).

Essentially, the macrosystem considers overarching patterns that exist (i.e., economic, social, educational, and political systems) and informs the micro-, meso-, and exo- systems in a concrete way. These macrosystems bring meaning and information to motivate participation in the roles, activities, and social networks already discussed, as well as their interrelations.

Bioecological model of human development. In 1986, Bronfenbrenner modified his ecological systems theory to emphasize the role of the individual in the context of his or her development; this is now known as the Bioecological Model of Human Development (i.e., the process, person, context, time model - PPCT). Changes to the model reflect how the environment can influence future behaviour differently depending on each person's unique system (i.e., microsystem, chronosystem). Additionally, Bronfenbrenner added what is currently known as the chronosystem (i.e., the changing of the person and the environment over time; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). The application of Bronfenbrenner's theory contributes to existing research by exploring factors that, at two distinct time periods in an individual's lifespan, might be associated with becoming and remaining involved in the animal rights movement. According to Bronfenbrenner's conceptualization of the chronosystem, these factors may change or remain consistent over time suggesting that the unique environmental and personal experiences that older youth report as being influential should be explored throughout the lifespan.

Bronfenbrenner's PPCT model remains an evolving theoretical system that is used to study human development over time (Bronfenbrenner, 2005). Development, as operationally defined by the model, is both the change and the continuation of the biopsychological characteristics of humans (i.e., individuals, groups, families, communities). Interestingly, this model conceptualizes human development as extending over the entire life span, over generations, and over time, which helps support bidirectionality (i.e., environment helps shape an individual, but individuals also help to shape their own environment; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). The model aids researchers in conducting research that documents the individual's environment for lasting influences (Bronfenbrenner, 1974). Developed alongside Cairns (2006), Bronfenbrenner introduced four defining features of the PPCT model that will be discussed: (1) Process, (2) Person, (3) Context, and (4) Time (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006).

The first component of the model – commonly recognized as the core of the model – is process. This component of the model explores interactions between the individual and their environments, coined as “proximal processes”. Bronfenbrenner and Morris (2006) add that this component is to be observed over time and is the primary way that human development occurs. For example, activities such as interacting with other people and reading are instances for individuals, especially children, to develop ideas and begin to understand the world around them (Tudge, Mokrova, Hatfield, & Karnik, 2009). Proximal processes and their influences on development differ depending on the other three components of the model. Characteristics of the person, exposure to certain contexts, and differing time periods all influence how much, or how little, each proximal process affects human development (discussed below).

The second component of the model is the person, which considers the biological aspects of a person, as well as defining individual characteristics (i.e., weight, height, hair colour). Both the social and the biological aspects of a person are divided into three subtypes that Bronfenbrenner termed: 1) demand, 2) resource, and 3) force characteristics (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998). Demand characteristics are defined as immediate stimuli to other people such as age, gender, and physical appearance, and these can impact initial meetings and impressions due to an immediately perceived expectation (i.e., stereotype). Resource characteristics, unlike demand characteristics, are not immediately apparent but can be assumed, whether true or not, from demand characteristics (i.e., life experiences, education, access to good nutrition, intelligence). Lastly, force characteristics differ depending on the individual's level of motivation, temperament, and persistence. For activists, these force characteristics that are influenced by unique contexts help elucidate why some people choose to further their activist commitments and others do not. For example, if two people are both equally interested in animal welfare this does not mean that both people will be equally as motivated or driven to further that commitment by joining an activist cause. Rather, if the level of motivation and persistence are higher for one person, Bronfenbrenner's PPCT model suggests that this person will be more likely to become and remain an activist. The interaction between the person and their environment, coupled with these force characteristics, can influence future behaviour.

Bronfenbrenner's PPCT model highlights the importance of these personal characteristics (i.e., demand, resource, force) in shaping an individual's context (environment). Change can range from an individual being very passive (i.e., by just existing in the environment, an individual can influence his or her surroundings with their

demand characteristics), to an active role (i.e., their resource characteristics can create change whether mental, physical, or emotional, or an individual is driven by their force characteristics to directly change the environment around them; Tudge et al., 2009).

The concept of context (i.e., the environment) incorporates what Bronfenbrenner initially outlined in his Ecological Systems Model: the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). Time is the final construct of the PPCT model and is a crucial element to consider given the developmental nature of the model. Bronfenbrenner and Morris (1998) stated that time consists of three subthemes: 1) micro-time (i.e., the time that passes during an activity or interaction), 2) meso-time (i.e., the frequency of certain activities and interactions occurring in an individual's life), and 3) macro-time (i.e., chrono-time or development that occurs during historical context and how they vary person to person). The following section shows how Bronfenbrenner's PPCT model can be applied to help understand some of early lifespan factors influencing youth to become and remain engaged in the animal rights movement.

The Path to Youth Animal Rights Activism: Application of Bronfenbrenner's PPCT Model

Developmental changes in childhood may be explained by the combination of both environmental factors and lived experiences (Heerwagen & Orians, 2002; Bronfenbrenner & Ceci, 1994). According to Bronfenbrenner's PPCT model, all facets of development stress the importance of environmental influences and lived experiences on understanding the world and shaping future behaviour (i.e., home, school, community; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). However, Bronfenbrenner later stressed the importance of "person-context interrelatedness" (Tudge et al., 2009, p. 199) to help explain that each context (i.e.,

environment – micro-, meso-, exo-, and macrosystem) is important depending on how prominent it figures in a person's life.

Consistently, research has shown that families, school, and the government and other political systems help shape young people's opportunities to engage in activism (Andolina, Jenkins, Zukin, & Keeter, 2003; Gordon & Taft, 2011; Kirshner, 2007).

However, research is also needed to examine how youth themselves shape their own activist socialization by examining the bidirectional influence of the environment on youth behaviour. Youniss et al. (2002) state, "socialization is not something that adults do to adolescents, it is something that youth do for themselves" (p. 133), suggesting that although adults might provide educational resources, an intrinsic desire is also necessary for older youth to further their activist commitment. For example, a study that included British university students found that participants who had a companion animal(s) (i.e., primarily cats and dogs) in their childhood were likely to care about animal welfare later in life (Paul & Serpell, 1993). Pallotta (2008) suggests that a propensity for animal activism may begin at an early age when children begin to question rituals they observe in the home, as well as other locations meaningful to the child. In the study, participants were asked to recount a time when they first began to question the idea of eating meat. For most participants, questioning and understanding where their food came from was reported as being an important catalyst for resisting the dominant meat-eating culture.

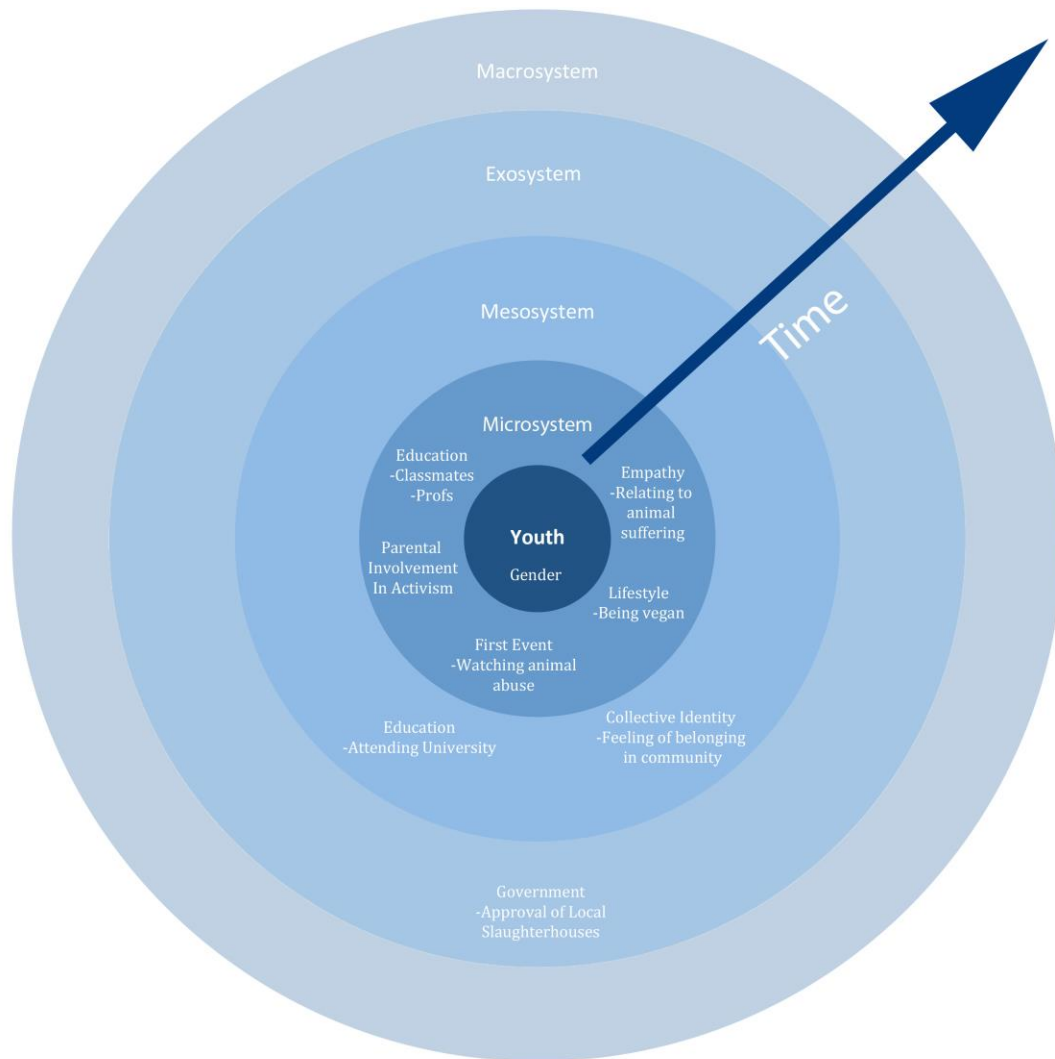
A potential source of confusion for young children is that during early socialization, sympathy for animals is both encouraged and discouraged (Pallotta, 2008). For example, a young child might refuse to eat meat during family dinners despite protests from their parents, or a child might argue against what they claim is an arbitrary difference

between the value of humans and non-human animals (Pallotta, 2005; Plous, 1991).

Further, Adams (1990) argues that the presence of an animal (whether companion, wild, or farm) allows for animals that are considered food to become individual subjects in the eyes of a child. However, despite this dichotomy – animals both as food and as individual subjects – children can make judgments about complex issues like the environment and animal welfare in a way to consider both anthropocentric and biocentric views. Severson and Kahn (2010) conducted a study with 2nd and 4th grade children and found that while children understood that pesticide use was damaging to both humans and the environment, they also reasoned that it was a financial necessity. Despite accepting the use of pesticides, children were still able to reason about the morality of their use, suggesting that from an early age children can understand and make their own decisions about moral causes and activist issues.

This study draws on Bronfenbrenner's PPCT model to understand some of the key distal (i.e., retrospective reports of early childhood) and proximal (i.e., current) factors influencing a young person's decision to become and remain involved in animal activism, and the following factors are considered at two distinct lifespan time points: 1) Education, 2) Gender, 3) Lifestyle, 4) Parental Involvement, 5) First Event, 6) Empathy, and 7) Collective Identity (see: figure 1).

Figure 1. Visual representation of the seven factors according to Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Model



These seven factors have been selected after an extensive review of past research; researchers have found these factors to be significantly related to commitment and participation in animal activist causes (Hansson & Jacobsson, 2014; Heerwagen & Orians, 2002; Herzog, 1993; Pallotta, 2005, 2007; Plous, 1991). Moreover, in applying Bronfenbrenner's PPCT model, these seven factors can be conceptualised as distal and/or proximal influences that, over time, can help to explain why a young child might become

interested in animal rights activism as well as why older youth might continue to remain involved in the animal rights movement.

The Path to Youth Animal Rights Activism and Seven Distal and/or Proximal Factors

Education. The first factor that past research has shown to be relevant in understanding participation in social activism is education (Gaarder, 2008; Jamison, 1998; Lowe & Ginsberg, 2002). Studies indicate that formal education is a factor that influences participation in animal rights activism. It is unclear whether it is formal education itself that influences participation or if it is because people with access to formal education may be socio-demographically different than people who do not have access to formal education (Flanagan & Levine, 2010; Herzog, 1993). For instance, it is possible that less educated people with activist motivations may not be able to participate in activist activities due to time and resource limitations (Oesterle, Kirkpatrick, & Mortimer, 2004).

In many studies conducted over the last few decades, research revealed that most of the young activists had received formal education and currently held professional jobs. Gaarder (2008) interviewed 27 female participants and found that while they held many different occupations (i.e., teachers, accountants, lawyers), most participants had either some college or held post-graduate degrees. Lowe and Ginsberg (2002) conducted a study of 105 attendees at an Animal Rights conference and concluded that most of the attendees were characterized by a relatively higher sociodemographic and education level and shared a strong moral commitment to the issue of animal rights activism. Rowan (1989) assessed education level in animal activists and found that, as compared to the public in general, they held more college and graduate degrees. Oesterle and colleagues (2004) conducted a

study which showed that studying at college or university was associated with greater community involvement, which suggests that young people who are monetarily advantaged (e.g., have the privilege of being able to attend a post-secondary institution) may have time and resources and be socially connected thus facilitating participation in social movements.

Gender. The second factor that past research has shown to be relevant to understanding participation in activism is gender. Coe and colleagues (2013) found that, while both young men and women engage in civic issues, women are often more likely to engage in activities related to social inequalities while men participate in formal politics and other political issues. Herzog (2007) has noted that similar percentages of men and women live with pets, visit zoos and sanctuaries, and can grieve the loss of a pet. However, greater percentages of men are in support of the use of animals for scientific research, recreationally hunt and hurt animals (e.g., men are likely to abuse animals; Adams, 2004; Ascione, 1997). Further, gender specific hobbies may begin to explain why women are engaged in the animal rights movement. For example, women are less likely to participate in hobbies such as hunting, and racing (e.g., horse, greyhound), wherein animals are used as resources rather than viewed as individual subjects (Jasper & Poulsen, 1995).

Plous (1991) attempted to profile the animal rights activist and randomly approached over 570 participants at an animal rights rally, and only 402 participants who fit a very restrictive definition of an animal rights activist were chosen to participate. Participants needed to 1) identify themselves as an activist, 2) self-report as being participants of the animal rights movement, 3) indicate a belief in the philosophy of animal

rights, and 4) report having travelled from another state expressly to join the protest. Additional people were randomly approached and if they were not associated with the rally in any way then they were also invited to participate; 172 non-activists were questioned. Plous (1991) found that, of the 402 activist members that participated in the study, 80% identified as female (as compared to 39% identifying as female from the 172 non-activists studied). Jasper and Poulsen (1995) examined the percentage of women engaged in animal rights and found that female membership in most causes ranged from 70-100%. To date, most of the research in this area tends to include a preponderance of women with fewer men as research participants (e.g., Coe et al., 2013; Forenza & Germak, 2015; Gaarder, 2011; Jasper & Poulsen, 1995; Lindblom & Jacobsson, 2014).

Researchers can only speculate as to why women seem open to the messages conveyed by the animal rights movement (Gaarder, 2011; Jasper & Poulsen, 1995). Herzog (2007) and Jasper and Poulsen (1995) make the connection between childrearing and participation in animal rights, understanding that women may see animals, like young children, as vulnerable and in need of protection. Ruddick (1989) posits that a woman's role as a child caretaker influences maternal thinking, whereby women are likelier than men to view violence as unacceptable. In the latter study, the female participants were not mothers, but Ruddick (1989) points to traditional gender roles and norms that encourage maternal thinking (i.e., media, family; Ruddick, 1989).

An additional concept to understand why women participate in animal rights activism is through a feminist lens, as the work of animal rights groups like Feminists for Animal Rights have been successful in pointing to the similarities between feminism and animal rights (Adams, 1990; Gaarder, 2011; Maiguashca, 2011). For some women, a

perceived connection between overarching systems of oppression in relation to animals and women influence views on animal welfare (Glasser, 2015). The term “matrix of oppression”, coined by Collins (2000), explains that the same, “structural, disciplinary, hegemonic, and interpersonal domains of power” organize all modes of oppression (p. 18). Further, evidence suggests that acts of sexual exploitation (e.g., rape, harassment, and battery) tend to promote violence against non-human animals as well (Ascione, 1997; Adams, 2004; Henry, 2004); this connection establishes the “ecofeminist” philosophy between the subordination of women and the subordination of animals (Warren, 1992). Given the interconnectedness in suffering experienced by women and animals, it can be posited that participation in women’s rights may be a catalyst to participation in animal rights.

First event.

When I checked in on him [a guinea pig] later he had been bitten by a predator, perhaps a neighborhood cat traipsing through our yard. I brought him in, but he started to tremble, then spasm, and just a little while later, died... my guilt and sadness – my sense of responsibility – was intense and profound, permanently affecting my sense of responsibility for other beings.

- Galadhon (2015, p. 324)

In this quotation Galadhon (2015) recounts a traumatic event, which he credits with changing his life. It is unfortunate because it was the demise of an animal that led to such an intense negative reaction, however this “first event” (i.e., an event that alters how an individual sees the world) that Galadhon (2015) experienced was integral to his shift to an animal rights perspective. Previous research has explored the influence of a “first event” that someone experiences in shaping their perception of animal suffering and/or exploitation. Primarily, researchers suggest that before any interest in activism occurs, a

catalyst, whereby a young person is exposed to something (e.g., documentary, witnessing abuse, personal experience; Aaltola, 2014) creates social and/or political outrage (Herzog, 1993). For example, the child who witnessed the harming of an animal might begin to reject eating animal food products (Hansson & Jacobson, 2014; Pallotta, 2008). Arguably, it is when this moral belief (e.g., that animals have a moral standing and should not be harmed) is violated that youth might perceive a need to protest (Herzog, 1993).

Important, however, is the question about when these beliefs are first violated among youth, and whether that first event is a critical period that influences some youth to alter their daily living activities (Lowe & Ginsberg, 2002). First events can occur at any point in development; in one study by Forenza and Germak (2015), half of the participants identified a ‘turning point’ that occurred between the ages of 18 to 22 years. These turning points coincided with the participant’s college education or highly charged political events (e.g., September 11th). This suggests that although these fundamental shifts in worldview thinking and associated behaviours can occur at a young age, researchers must not overlook the possibility that fundamental shifts can also occur later in young adulthood. Individuals may still experience a ‘turning point’ during young adulthood through exposure to higher education and understanding highly charged political events.

Parental involvement. Social structures shape young people’s access to community involvement, but more importantly, having a compassionate home environment where parents are also activists or who support one’s activist lifestyle also influences whether youth will participate in activist causes (Forenza & Germak, 2015). For example, children and young adults who have grown up in a household with activist parents are exposed to the philosophies and beliefs of the movement as well as specific

lifestyle choices that the parents might follow. These children may be likely to participate in animal rights activism as it is something they have been exposed to since birth. When parents place a high value on community involvement and developing an activist identity within a group, their children will experience greater exposure to activist related activities and discussion, and in turn may be influenced to participate in activism (Forenza & Germak, 2015). In a study conducted by Forenza and Germak (2015), participants stated that their parents were involved in activism (i.e., involved in activist, political, professional, and local communities). When parents shared similar beliefs and values associated with activist commitments, this strong environmental influence helped shape participants' early participation in social activist causes. Bronfenbrenner (1977) discussed parents as an important influence within the microsystem; a child's relationship with their parents can influence future behaviour. Participants in the study by Forenza and Germak (2015) reported that this interaction and early immersion in the activist lifestyle was important.

Lifestyle. Peterson (1998) emphasizes the importance of diet in the animal rights movement by pointing out the ease of transition from a meat-eating diet to a vegan diet. In this sense,

We've established women's rights, children's rights, gay rights, and I think the final frontier of social evolution is animal rights. I see it as much more a social cause than a political cause. It's not a movement you need to join by sending a donation. It's a movement you can join at your next meal.

- Peterson (1998, p. 87)

If one were to ask the average person to think about where their food came from (i.e., burgers, chicken wings, cheese), most people would picture the idyllic nature of farm raised animals, cows grazing on pasture, chickens running free, pigs feeding from a

trough. Problematically, meat, eggs, and dairy products are produced by huge agribusiness, known as factory farms or concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs; Hunt, 2015). Factory farms hold hundreds of thousands of animals in confined conditions without access to sunlight, pasture, or space; this system is inevitably detrimental to the environment, threatening human health, and leading to the tragic demise of millions of animals on a yearly basis. For most animal rights activists, awareness of factory farms and understanding the inhumane conditions animals are forced to live in is a controversial issue that led many individuals interested in animal welfare toward public campaigning against these powerful agribusinesses (Frank, 1979).

When it comes to animal rights activists, the biggest change in lifestyle comes from a conversion from a meat-based diet to a vegetarian or vegan diet (Herzog, 1993; McDonald, 2000; Mika, 2006; Pallotta, 2005). This initial denial of animal products can motivate people to seek out new groups, primarily animal rights and environmentalist groups. The implementation of an animal rights lifestyle generally occurs over several years and requires a complete change of one's life (Pallotta, 2005). In a study conducted by Herzog (1993), animal rights activists who were interviewed reported a large initial change in lifestyle that led to participating in animal rights activism. Researchers recently conducted functional MRIs on three groups of people (omnivores, vegetarians, and vegans) and found that the groups differed in their neural representation which may speak to differing motivations and beliefs (Filippi et al., 2010). This suggests that certain lifestyles can be mapped with specific neural representations depending on whether the participant is an omnivore, vegetarian, or vegan and this may reflect a difference in motivation, values, and beliefs in regards to animal suffering.

Veganism, specifically, is one of the most common lifestyle choices associated with animal rights activism, and includes a range of behaviours including not consuming meat or dairy products, avoiding products tested on animals, avoiding shoes and clothes containing leather, and not killing animals many believe to be pests (e.g., rats; Erben & Balaban-Sali, 2016; Maurer, 2002; Pallotta, 2005). This conversion often requires interaction with other vegetarians or vegans through close family members or friends; when these resources are absent, local vegan cafés, interactions in public settings, and for young people groups on campus can provide the necessary support (Mika, 2006; Pallotta, 2005).

Unlike other social movements, there is no neutral position to take on animal rights activism (Lowe, 2001; Pallotta, 2005). For example, when engaging in social activism related to other causes such as abortion or the death penalty, a person may be equivocal to the stance they would take depending on each individual case. For example, one might vehemently protest the death penalty for children tried as an adult, but be supportive of the death penalty if the perpetrator has harmed a child. Subsequently, one can be against abortion if the growing fetus is healthy, but be supportive of abortion if the child or mother is at risk if the pregnancy continues. However, since strict vegetarians and vegans must eat every day, they must decide regarding animal rights every time they choose to eat (Pallotta, 2005). For most vegans, support of specific forms of animal exploitation (i.e., for medical research) over others (i.e., factory farming) is unlikely to occur; all forms of animal exploitation perceived to be beneficial to industry are unlikely to receive sympathy from vegetarians or vegans.

This conversion can take a drastic toll on the individual attempting to make the shift to an animal rights lifestyle. For example, not only can new bonds be formed with members of the animal rights movement, but there can be a severing or a renegotiation of friendship terms with old contacts. Existing relationships may cause strain if moral beliefs about animal welfare and suffering differ substantially between people (McDonald, 2000). Some vegans will actively sever ties with family members and friends, whereas some are lucky to have support during the conversion. Ultimately, the attitudes of family members and friends can discourage or encourage the development of a vegan or vegetarian lifestyle as these are distinct environmental influences; each person will react differently to the attitudes of their family and friends. After the shift, vegans must still cohabitate with meat eaters and learn to exist in a world defined by some aspects that they have rejected (Pallotta, 2005).

For youth, this shift can be particularly detrimental if they do not receive support during their lifestyle change (Pallotta, 2005). For example, a parent's reaction to a child or adolescent (as compared with a young adult) would be significant, as parents control what the child eats and act as a greater environmental influence until the child moves out of the house. Youth might feel like they should remove themselves from negative family influences, whereas a supportive family can provide all the necessary reassurances to this lifestyle change.

Empathy. Empathy is defined as the ability to understand the internal states of other beings (Christov-Moorea, Simpson, Coude, Grigaitytea, Iacoboni, & Ferrari, 2014; Paul, 2000). Recent definitions center on two aspects of empathy including understanding (cognitive) and sharing (affective) another's emotional state (Nelson, Adamson, &

Bakeman, 2011; Schwenck et al., 2014; Taylor & Signal, 2005). Empathy is an important facet of human and non-human interaction as extant research suggests a link between prosocial behaviours such as sharing and volunteering and empathic understanding (Andreoni & Vesterlund, 2001; Taylor & Signal, 2005; Von Fragstein et al., 2008).

A growing body of research continues to support the idea that there are increased empathy skills associated with a child's attachment to pets (e.g., dogs, cats; Ascione, 2004; Coleman, Hall, & Hay, 2008; deWaal, 2013; Friesen, 2010; Gee, Crist, & Carr, 2010; Paul, 2000). A child's burgeoning empathy regarding humans, animals, and the environment is shaped by many influences such as parents, peers, teachers, and lived experiences with environmental systems and interactions with other animals (Melson, 2014). Researchers understand that this link between empathy and interactions with humans, animals, and the environment has implications for future participation in animal rights activism (Furnham, McManus, & Scott, 2003; Galvin & Herzog, 1992, 1998; Melson, 2014; Shapiro, 1994; Tardif-Williams & Bosacki, 2015).

It is difficult to be so close to a movement and its defining ideology and beliefs without understanding cognitively why it is important to support. For example, Furnham et al. (2003) surveyed the attitudes of 833 students and found that positive attitudes towards animal experimentation were negatively correlated with vegetarianism and empathy, suggesting that those high in empathy and who were also vegetarian did not support animal experimentation. It can be proposed that empathy would be correlated with increased participation in animal rights activism. Further, in a study of college students by Galvin and Herzog (1992) it was shown that participants who identified as an animal rights activist were more likely than non-activist college students to hold an "absolutist"

moral view; this means that activists were high in idealism (i.e., pursuit of unrealistic ideals) and low in relativism (i.e., the belief that morals are not a truth but are influenced by context, culture, and/or society).

While the public often perceives activists as emotional and aggressive, the research indicates contradictory findings (Herzog, 1993, Jacobsson & Lindblom, 2013). Research focusing on emotions among animal rights activists highlights the need to consider levels of empathy, emotional expression and prosociality on a continuum. For example, the level of expressed emotion felt toward the issue of animal rights will differ for each person. In this way, some animal rights activists are highly motivated by emotion, whereas others are tempered in their emotional response (Herzog, 1993). Herzog (1993) presented the case of one participant who explained that animal suffering did not emotionally affect him, despite devoting his life to their protection. While activists state that the initial need to protect animals stems from an emotional response to animal suffering, an intellectual approach is often necessary to sway other people's thoughts and beliefs (Herzog, 1993; Pallotta, 2005).

Collective identity. Collective identity is distinct from the other factors because while a feeling of community belonging might be correlated with certain personality characteristics (Bäck, Bäck, & Knapton, 2015; DeWall, Deckman, Pond, Jr., & Bonser, 2011), it is still a distinct concept that is separate from personality (Polletta & Jasper, 2001). There are many collective identities shared amongst social movement members, but these can include identities linked to veganism, being an animal lover, or a link with activism itself.

Collective identity is an individual's cognitive, moral, and emotional connection with a broader community, category, practice, or institution. It is a perception of a shared status or relation, which may be imagined rather than experienced directly,

and it is distinct from personality identities, although it may form part of a personal identity.

- Polletta and Jasper (2001, p. 285)

In this quotation, Polletta and Jasper (2001) discuss the complexity of collective identity as it is both related to a personal identity while also being separate from it. It encompasses many connections between person and community and is important to consider when trying to understand the influences that motivate youth to become and remain involved in animal rights activism. For example, it is important to consider whether a feeling of community belonging helps youth remain involved in animal rights activism.

Current social movement theories (i.e., resource mobilization and political process models) have fallen into two camps regarding collective identity. Through examining collective identities in a historical context, researchers can shed light on how and why movements emerge and if this connection to a social movement helps keep people involved in their activist commitments (Hunt & Benford, 2004). Polletta and Jasper (2001) asked why and when people adopted a collective identity and their reasoning for doing so (e.g., did they join of their own accord?). If participants answered that their decision to participate was because of someone else, it was purported that the feeling of community belonging was an important influence for joining a social movement. Some collective identity researchers postulate that people participate because the beliefs of the group align with their own personal philosophy and vice versa (Fominaya, 2010).

Individuals in the animal rights movement must undergo what is known as ‘de-socialization’ (Pallotta, 2005, p.11) by adopting a differing viewpoint from people who do not undergo this process. It is argued that once this process is complete then a new collective identity can emerge that is united with the group’s beliefs. Fominaya (2010)

stresses the question of what constitutes collective identity, and if it is something that movement members use to keep them committed to the cause. Kieffer (1984), in the entry stage of activism, states that individuals are bound by strong feelings of integrity and a deep sense of community. The urge to be part of something bigger that can effect change is a strong influence, especially with people who are new to a social activist movement (Jennings, Parra-Medina, Hilfinger Messias, McLoughlin, 2006; Putnam, 2000). Putnam (2000) argues that those who participate in civil society often associate with an activist collective identity because this leads to building social networks to create change. Further, Taylor and Whittier (1992) argue that the main goal of collective identity is to oppose the dominant cultural practices, which is inherent in social movements that aim to counter culturally dominant lifestyles.

Offering a different perspective, Bobel (2007) questions if self-identifying as an activist is necessary or appropriate to assume. Social movement literature claims that being an activist is a collective identity that is linked to collective action (i.e., action taken by a group of people with a common objective; Rupp & Taylor, 1999). However, Bobel (2007) questions if this construction of a collective identity even matters for successful participation in an activist movement. Klandermans (2004) and Hunt and Benford (2004) both claim that the relationship between collective identity and movement participation are reinforced empirically and that this relationship is straightforward and common sense. Other theorists, however, argue that a new way of thinking about collective identity needs to be determined (MacDonald, 2002). For example, Thompson (1997) found a division between people who participate in activism and people who claim to be activists. Thompson (1997) recounts that many of her participants felt that they were not sure if they

belonged in the group, that they had not done enough, or that they were not qualified.

Bobel (2007) suggests that researchers should not just assume that participants claim the label “activist” and that there is a difference between “doing activism” and “being activist” (p. 149). This construct requires attention, especially when examining a younger population who may already be struggling with their own personal identity development (including a developing activist identity).

A Comparison of Animal Rights Activism and Dis/Ability Rights Activism.

Still, I knew that when the other children compared me to a monkey, they were not doing it to flatter me. It was an insult. I understood that they were commenting on my inability to stand completely upright when out of my wheelchair – my inability to stand straight like a normal human being... however, I wasn’t exactly sure why it should hurt my feelings – after all, monkeys were my favorite animal.

- Taylor (2011, p. 192)

As emphasized in the quotation and discussed previously, the likening of an animal to someone who is dehumanized (i.e., an enemy of war) is still prevalent in Western culture. As Taylor (2011) illustrates, this belief affects the dis/abled population as well. To liken a dis/abled person to an animal is to insult, break down, and denigrate that person. However, when individuals engage in animal rights activism, and express that both humans and animals have equal moral standing, this suggests that they hold a worldview that challenges the dominant perspective that humans are superior to animals (i.e., speciesism; Paul, 2000).

It is often thought that people who participate in animal rights activism are indifferent to human suffering. However, many people who engage in animal rights activism also engage in other human-based types of activism (Bobel, 2007; Lowe & Ginsberg, 2002). Considering a cause that is distinguished from the animal rights literature

is difficult. For example, women's rights and feminism are interwoven with animal rights in a way that would make studying one cause independent of the other difficult. Further, researchers argue that environmentalism is a human rights cause and perhaps environmentalism could be studied independently from animal rights activism. However, Lowe and Ginsberg (2002) state that activist causes like environmentalism and animal rights are considered different than other activist causes, primarily because movements that protect the rights of animals and nature are considered post-citizenship movements.

Contemporary animal and environmental movements are post-citizenship movements defined as having members who are well integrated into society (i.e., educated, financially well-off) and who advocate for goals that offer little to no benefit to the actual member it has been argued that (Lowe & Ginsberg, 2002); in this way, it is thought to be both a middle class and an altruistic movement (Jasper, 1997; Lowe & Ginsberg, 2002; Pallotta, 2005). Parkin (1968) coined the term "middle class radicalism", which shares a lot of values with animal and environment rights members as middle class radicalists are highly educated, considered socioeconomically middle-class, and are advocating for goals to benefit non-members of the movement groups.

Therefore, in this research study, dis/ability rights movements (i.e., physical disabilities, mental illness, and autism) were chosen as the comparison group because, despite sharing conceptual ties with the animal rights movement (i.e., due to oppression and likening a dis/abled person to an animal; Taylor, 2011), dis/ability rights movements are not considered post-citizenship movements. Members tend to advocate for themselves and close personal relationships only, have members of varying socioeconomic status, and are comprised of different types of people (Barnes, 2007; Chandler, 2016). For example,

Taylor (2011) has claimed that the dis/abled population is the largest minority in the world and comes in all colours, shapes, genders, nationalities, and economic and political backgrounds. The goal of the dis/ability rights movement is to change current legislation regarding inaccessibility and ableism (i.e., discrimination of disabled persons) and to educate the public about dis/abilities and their variations to ensure that disabled people are included in all aspects of life.

Dis/ability rights and animal rights activists may differ, however, as the influences that lead to becoming and remaining involved in the movement can be different (Orsini & Smith, 2010). According to Gusfield (1994) this might be because dis/ability rights is a “linear” movement, whereas the animal rights movement is both “linear” and “fluid”. Gusfield (1994) makes the distinction between linear and fluid; a linear movement is one that has a well-defined end whereas a fluid movement can have people advocating for different changes within the same overarching umbrella movement. For dis/ability rights, movement members are advocating for equal rights to able-bodied people and are doing this by attempting to change the way institutions operate and for political change. In contrast, animal rights movements embody linear and fluid aspects of Gusfield’s model. Although the animal rights movement is political, in that it aims to change policy and law, it is ultimately concerned with the everyday values associated with promoting a lifestyle that shows the proper relationship between humans and animals. However, if the culture of animal exploitation does not change then the movement is not successful; for the animal rights movement to see significant success, the culture must change with it, suggestive of a fluid movement as it seeks to change the everyday living of people’s lives.

Bridging the Gap

Many adults believe that youth are the key to a stable global future and are required to “forge the future” and stabilize our current economic and social issues (Gordon & Taft, p. 1500; Kirshner, 2007; Putnam, 2000). In current research, it is consistently being shown that youth are capable and valuable participants and society has witnessed a shift toward viewing today’s youth as active citizens (Gordon & Taft, 2011; Kirshner, 2007). Research often fails to address the fact that “political socialization is not something that adults do to adolescents, but rather it is something that youth do for themselves” (Youniss et al., 2002, p. 133). Toward this goal, this qualitative study explored some of the early childhood (i.e., distal) and current (i.e., proximal) influences that older youth perceive to be important in shaping their personal life course toward becoming and remaining involved in the animal rights movement.

The extant research conducted on engagement in social movements has focused on human rights based movements. Animal rights activism is a unique movement, most notably for the lifestyle changes that often must accompany certain ethical and moral beliefs (i.e., veganism) in addition to the activist lifestyle. The animal rights movement is also considered an altruistic movement (see: post-citizenship movement, fluid movement), as young people who participate in the movement are not advocating for the rights of other humans or to extend their own human rights, but rather are advocating to provide a voice for those who literally cannot speak for themselves. This qualitative research study contributes to the existing body of research by focusing on the animal rights movement and applies Bronfenbrenner’s PPCT model to explore seven distal and proximal factors. These factors are thought to be important in shaping young people’s life course toward

becoming and remaining involved in the animal rights movement, with a focus on two distinct time periods (early childhood and current).

Furthermore, this research explored the potential similarities and differences in influences between older youth who participate in animal rights activism and dis/ability rights activism. This comparative lens provides a unique contribution to the literature as, to date and to the author's knowledge, these two important social movement groups have not been looked at comparatively. What initially motivates a person to become involved in activism may be similar or different to what keeps them motivated to remain involved. These influences may differ drastically depending on which social movement group is being examined.

The Current Study

This qualitative study contributes to the current social movement literature as semi-structured interviews were completed with 6 animal rights and 6 dis/ability rights activists ranging in age from 18-30 years who self-reported being an activist for a period of at least six months and engaged in political and social outreach (e.g., demonstrations, leafletting, protesting). A comparative interview piece was conducted between animal rights and dis/ability rights activists to explore similarities and differences in the seven distal and proximal factors supported in past studies as being important in shaping young people's lives toward becoming and remaining involved in activism. Applying Bronfenbrenner's PPCT model, this study considered some of the lifespan factors that young people report as being important in influencing them to become and remain involved in activism across two distinct time periods including early childhood (i.e., distal factors) and currently (i.e., proximal factors). The application of Bronfenbrenner's theory can allow for a unique

contribution by helping researchers explain that at different times throughout the lifespan influences that affect the decision to become and remain an activist can change or remain consistent. During childhood and adolescence people are becoming aware of important social issues, political institutions, and problems in the community, which shapes the life course towards becoming involved in activist commitments (Flanagan & Levine, 2010; Flanagan & Sherrod, 1998). Currently, older youth can consider the kind of world they wish to live in and important issues become salient moral and political concerns.

The research questions are as follows: 1) What early childhood (distal) factors do participants self-report as being important in influencing them to become involved in the animal rights movement? 2) What current (proximal) factors do participants self-report as being important in influencing them to remain involved in the animal rights movement? 3) Are there similarities and/or differences in the factors reported between animal rights and dis/ability rights activists?

Anticipated findings. It was anticipated that participants from the animal rights and dis/ability rights groups would report each of the seven factors discussed in the literature review (i.e., education, gender, lifestyle, parental involvement, first event, empathy, and collective identity) as being key influences in influencing them to become and remain involved in the animal rights movement.

Education. This study explored whether time spent in school (e.g., elementary, high school, post-secondary) would be related to participation in the animal rights movement.

- ❖ It was expected that participants would report education as being influential in shaping their early and continued participation in animal rights activism.

Gender. Past research suggests that women are likelier than men to participate in animal rights activism for many reasons (i.e., similar forms of oppression, increased empathy).

- ❖ It was expected that this study would include more women than men as women would be likelier than men to participate in animal rights activism.

Lifestyle. This study explored whether adopting a vegan or vegetarian lifestyle was integral to participation in animal rights activism.

- ❖ It was expected that participants in the animal rights movement would practice veganism and that their initial commitment to the vegan lifestyle would be associated with their continued participation in animal rights activism.

Parental involvement. This study explored whether parental involvement in an activist cause was an important influence for participation in animal rights activism among older youth.

- ❖ It was expected that youth would report parental involvement in a social movement (if their parent(s) were involved previously or currently) as influential in shaping their early participation in animal rights activism.

First event. This study explored the influence of a first event in childhood or young adulthood and whether this was reported as an important catalyst for participation in animal rights activism by older youth.

- ❖ It was expected that participants would report an emotionally salient first event and that this first event would be discussed as an influence shaping early participation in animal rights activism among older youth.

Empathy. This study explored the importance of empathy for shaping participation in animal rights activism in older youth.

- ❖ It was expected that animal rights activists would be emotionally invested in the rights of animals. This empathetic response would be important to their early and continued participation in animal rights activism.

Collective identity. This study investigated the influence of the community on participation in animal rights activism through a collective identity (e.g., being vegan, caring about animal welfare, being an activist).

- ❖ It was expected that animal rights participants would consider themselves part of a community, would develop a collective identity that is in line with the beliefs of the group, and would report this community membership as being an important influence on their early and continued participation in animal rights activism.
- ❖ However, past research has suggested that this latter link might not be so clear (Bobel, 2007). Some animal rights participants may not be influenced by community membership, and would not report collective identity as important in shaping their early and continued participation in animal rights activism.

Animal Rights Activism and Dis/ability Rights Activism. The final research question explored whether there are similarities and/or differences in the influences that participants report as being important for becoming and remaining involved in the animal and dis/ability rights activism.

- ❖ This area of research is highly underdeveloped, and therefore no specific findings were anticipated a priori; rather the data analysis was completely exploratory.

Chapter 2: Methods

Personal Position

To better understand the potential influence of my role as the researcher on the research process I approached this qualitative research study reflexively (Pelias, 2011). Probst (2015) defines reflexivity as awareness about the effect that a person has on his/her research, while simultaneously being aware of how the research is affecting that person. However, Pillow (2003) states that one can be too reflexive as this does not help to solve the issue of subjectivity. I agree with this statement as well as I did not want to focus too strongly on the continuous effect that I was having on my research and vice versa. I felt that would have sidetracked me from being able to engage fully with my research, especially since I have previous interest in social activism. If focusing on reflexivity for the sake of subjectivity (despite research stating that this does not solve the problem), the valuable research findings and insights about the work may be lost and I did not want to do that. In fact, I believe that my position as researcher and the position of my participants as the researched speaks to a need for a collaborative creation of knowledge rather than me, alone, seeking to find knowledge to support my anticipated research findings.

To preface this reflexive standpoint, I will admit that I initially had concerns approaching my research from a qualitative perspective; it took me out of my comfort zone and forced me to change the way I consider, and conduct, scientific research. Prior to conducting this research study, I had never conducted a qualitative interview, or learned to code themes that had not already been provided to me. I am thankful for this, but I also know that this comes with limitations that must also be addressed to fully understand my findings.

When choosing my participant groups, I knew that I was already going to be emotionally involved as I am personally involved in the animal and dis/ability rights movements. I am not involved in these movements as an activist, per se, but as a self-proclaimed animal lover and someone who suffers with a mental illness. Despite already being aware of these movements, I was not prepared for just how much this research and the participants' discussions would affect me. Gemignani (2011) states that a researcher's most hidden feelings are the ones that people need to see the most, and that this might be hard for some researchers as confronting self-awareness is difficult for the truest researcher; admitting your feelings and faults can be very difficult. Further, Gilgun (2008) explains that when researching sensitive topics, these emotional reactions can be unexpected and powerful, and that is exactly what I experienced, namely an unanticipated emotional reaction that I believe has changed me.

Prior to conducting my interviews, I did not divulge to my participants my personal involvement in the animal and dis/ability rights movements primarily because at the time I felt my stance on animal rights and dis/ability rights was consistent with theirs. I understood the need for both movements, and I support equality for the dis/abled population and agree with the need to end animal exploitation in every way. I aimed to remain as neutral as possible, which is why, for the animal rights participants, I did not tell them that I ate meat and that I did not follow the lifestyle they strive so hard to promote. Reflecting back on it, I would have done it differently and told them that I did not participate in the vegan lifestyle. Withholding that information was a form of deception with which I was uncomfortable. As a researcher, I worried that my participants would not feel comfortable sharing their unique perspectives if they knew that I was not vegan.

However, I think the most unexpected result of this study was that by talking to individuals who are so passionate about the need to end animal exploitation I began to internally reflect daily about the choice I was making to consume meat. I thought about it so regularly that I began the transition shortly after my first set of interviews to eliminate meat from my diet completely. I could not continue to discuss animal suffering, read about animal suffering in the literature, and see stories daily about animal suffering on social media and not do something to change my own personal contribution to animal exploitation. I hope that when my participants read this they see that their words moved me so much that I made some serious lifestyle changes.

The Piloting Process

Prior to conducting interviews with my participants, a separate interview was conducted with Dr. Christine Tardif-William's fourth year thesis student, Kia Matthews, an animal rights activist. Piloting the interview questions with Kia was important as this process allowed for some meaningful editing and rewording of the questions. Kia and I worked closely on the questions both before and after the pilot interview to order the questions in a way that would make the conversation flow, and to tweak wording in cases where the intended meaning of the question was hard to decipher. From this pilot interview, Kia and I could finalize the interview questions (see Appendix A). Further, the piloting process was also conducted to determine how long on average the interviews would take. The interview with Kia lasted approximately 46 minutes and from there I could tell my participants that the interview would range from 30 to 60 minutes.

Additionally, the piloting process enabled me to improve my interviewing skills. For example, during the pilot interview I could practice my skills at establishing rapport

with the interviewees, going over the consent form and what the interview would entail, addressing any concerns that the interviewees might have had, and engaging in a quick discussion about daily pleasantries (i.e., school, life, social activism).

Research Design

The research design was initially developed to explore some of the socio-demographic, family-based, and personality factors that might shape young activists to become and remain engaged in activism. The interview questions were developed drawing on past research, and each question was developed to address each of the seven factors that had been shown to be relevant in past research studies including: 1) Education, 2) Gender, 3) Lifestyle, 4) Parental Involvement, 5) First Event, 6) Empathy, and 7) Collective Identity. To the researcher's knowledge, these questions were not intended to seek answers about the participant's critical analysis of the movement, but rather were consistent with the goal of exploring the seven factors that past research has suggested were important in shaping youth to become and remain engaged in activism. The final two interview questions (see: appendix A) were developed by Dr. Christine Tardif-Williams' fourth year student for her fourth-year undergraduate thesis research project. This qualitative study was not designed to measure developmental changes over time, but rather the goal of the study was to explore two distinct time periods in the early lifespan of older youth (i.e., early childhood and current).

The nature of the interview questions allowed participants an opportunity to interpret the questions from their unique perspectives and to share these views with the researcher. For example, the interview questions allowed space for the participants to discuss their ethical and political motivations and how these motivations also helped shape

their engagement and continued participation in activism. The qualitative nature of this study and the use of a semi-structured interview technique allowed for the emergence of some interesting and novel findings that also make a unique contribution to existing research.

This qualitative research study was designed to explore seven factors at two distinct time periods in the personal life course of older youth that were associated with becoming and remaining involved in animal rights activism. Moreover, in applying Bronfenbrenner's PPCT model, these seven factors were conceptualized as distal and/or proximal influences that, over time, could help to explain why young children might become interested in animal rights activism and why older youth might continue to remain involved in the animal rights movement; influences associated with becoming and remaining an animal rights activist can change or stay consistent over time. During childhood and adolescence people are becoming aware of important social issues, political institutions, and problems in the community and this shapes the life course towards becoming involved in activist commitments (Flanagan & Levine, 2010; Flanagan & Sherrod, 1998). Currently, older youth can consider the kind of world they wish to live in and important issues become salient moral and political concerns that can shape the life course towards remaining involved in activist commitments.

Participants

Participants for this research study were recruited from animal and dis/ability rights activist groups and clubs both on and off Brock University campus. The Research Ethics Board on campus granted clearance for the study and the recruitment strategies (File #15-209). First, posters were placed around the university campus and in off campus locations

after being approved by the school (i.e., vegan cafés). However, these latter strategies proved to be unsuccessful for recruitment, and this was likely because this specific demographic of people were probably not looking at these on and off campus posters. What was successful was initially recruiting participants by messaging campus clubs and groups through email to determine whether any of their members would be interested in participating. For the sake of confidentiality, the names of these clubs and groups are not disclosed. Word of mouth was also used to recruit participants.

A total of 12 participants were interviewed; six (two male) participants identified themselves as animal rights activists, and five (two male) participants identified themselves as dis/ability rights activists (i.e., mental illness, physical disability). Interestingly, one participant identified herself as both an animal and dis/ability rights activist and was used in the analysis for dis/ability rights since that was most important to her. Animal rights activists ranged in age from 23 – 28 years ($M = 25.2$) and disability rights activists ranged in age from 21 – 30 years ($M = 25.5$). The participant who identified herself as both an animal and a dis/ability rights activist was 27 years old. All 12 participants either held an undergraduate degree or were currently enrolled in undergraduate or graduate programs. All participants had been activists for longer than one year (with a range of 3 to 14 years). Additionally, all participants had a strong understanding of the topic matter (i.e., purposive sampling, see: Forenza & Germak, 2015).

Procedure

Similar to Herzog's (1993) methodology, a qualitative research approach was used to study a small sample of both animal and dis/ability rights activists. A qualitative

research approach was used for three reasons. First, qualitative research helps to elucidate the human experiences that are often not able to be quantified because of their complexity (Patton, 1990). Second, qualitative research is used to help explore the themes in research where existing literature is lacking (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Third, a less structured interview protocol allows for themes to emerge that were not initially expected.

Participants were sent the letter of invitation and the consent form to review prior to the interview time. Once the participants arrived, the consent form was explained in detail and they were explicitly asked if they were willing to be part of the study (Olsen, 2011). Participants were then informed of their right to skip any questions they felt uncomfortable answering and told that they could withdraw at any time without penalty. None of the 12 participants expressed concern over any of the questions and no one withdrew from the study.

Participants were told to write their email addresses down for member checking and to receive a copy of the results upon completion of the study. Participants were also asked to consent to the audio recording and were assured that their responses would be kept on a locked computer and consent forms and additional documents would be kept in Dr. Christine Tardif-Williams office. With face-to-face interviews, anonymity is not possible, however the responses were kept confidential by ensuring that only the researcher and the researcher's supervisor had access to the research data. Prior to the start of the interview a few minutes were spent establishing rapport with the participants; this process is necessary when interviews rely heavily on the viewpoints of the participants and their personal experiences (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). During the interviews, a few participants asked for clarification regarding the confidentiality agreement. For example, if

a participant had brought something up that they thought could identify them they were assured that it would not be transcribed or that it would be transcribed with an imprecise response that they would member check once the transcript was completed. Further, participants were assured that by providing a pseudonym this would ensure that at no point would their answers be tied to their real name.

Once the interview had finished, participants were thanked for their time and told that they would receive their transcript in the upcoming weeks, at which time they would have two weeks to make any necessary revisions. Following that, they would be contacted if their name was drawn as part of the draw to receive a gift card in the amount of \$50 dollars to a local grocery store (as stated on the consent form) or when the results were available to them as a participant.

Interviews

Semi-structured in-depth interviews were used to explore the factors that past research has revealed to be associated with participation in animal rights activism. Semi-structured interviews represent the most effective methodological approach to use in this study. Past research provided a reference for developing an initial set of interview questions, however, the general topic remained flexible to allow participants to discuss additional thoughts that the initial set of developed questions did not address (Bolderston, 2012; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Gaarder (2008) describes the necessity for qualitative research when conducting an exploratory study as this allows for a way to examine what has already been found in the research and to explore new and emerging themes. In short, a semi-structured interview was conducted due to the exploratory nature of the study and

to allow the participants to discuss in-depth their experiences and the influences associated with both becoming and remaining an activist.

Given the potential sensitivity of the interview questions (i.e., some of the participants brought up emotional situations), in-depth interviews allowed for trust to be generated and to give the participants the opportunity to skip any question(s) that they did not feel comfortable answering (Gilham, 2000). The use of quantitative research procedures (i.e., questionnaires) does not allow for that rapport to be built, nor does it allow for the intricate nature of human experiences to be captured effectively (Patton, 1990).

The average length of the interviews that were conducted for this study was approximately 45 minutes. The interviews were conducted in a variety of private and confidential settings (i.e., department conference room, privately booked library room, graduate lab) and all interviews were conducted in person, except for three privately conducted phone interviews). All interviews were audio-recorded using two phone applications; one application was designed for face-to-face interviews and the second application recorded phone calls. In every case, the recordings were done with the participant's consent.

After the interviews, the researcher personally transcribed the audio-recordings using a pseudonym in place of the participant's real name and the written transcripts were sent to the participants via email for member checking (Doyle, 2007; Harvey, 2015). Member checking is the process of allowing the participants to be part of the research process and to allow them to corroborate the veracity of the transcript (Campbell, Quincy, Osserman, & Pedersen, 2013). Lincoln and Guba (1985) cite member checking as being

the most crucial aspect of establishing credibility. Unfortunately, I did not get the response back from participants as I was hoping. Three participants responded back to me with conscientious feedback, however most of the participants did not respond to me after the two-week timeline had passed as outlined on the consent form. Regrettably, it was not a process that generated any deeper reflection. However, this could reflect the fact that the transcription process was faithful to the interviews and participants felt that their thoughts were accurately recorded. Regardless, participants were still given the opportunity to delete, add, or change any part of the transcript that they felt was not an accurate account of our interview.

The Coding Process

After the interview, the audio-recorded interviews were transcribed (Olsen, 2011). The data was transcribed with each participant being assigned a pseudonym; the participant had the choice to generate their own or one was generated for them which was dissimilar to their name. The transcription process for each interview took approximately 4 – 5 hours to complete and a further hour was taken to check for errors by comparing the transcript to the audio recording (Campbell et al., 2013). Not only did this latter process help the researcher identify any errors and to check accuracy, but it also allowed the researcher to establish deeper familiarity with each participant's interview and facilitated the coding process and identification of themes.

Figure 2. Word cloud of animal rights activists

who suggest that it is always preferable to code using themes revealed in previous research, whenever possible. A quotation was coded as a theme if it explicitly mentioned the theme (i.e., education, lifestyle, etc.) or if the responses mentioned something directly related to the theme (i.e., “in my time at university” as a reference to education). If participants mentioned something consistently but was not initially a theme, it was written down as an unexpected theme. Dr. Christine Tardif-Williams’ fourth year thesis student coded approximately 20% of the participant responses to ensure the reliability and accuracy of the themes. Additionally, a word cloud was generated (i.e., one generated per activist group; see figures 2 and 3) to show which themes were discussed most often in response to the interview questions (if “animal” and “animals” both were generated on the word cloud, they were combined into one word).

Overall the coding process required a lot of time and effort to ensure that the themes uncovered in the interview transcripts (both expected and unexpected) were representative of the participants’ responses. From this, the following themes are discussed in the next section: 1) Education, 2) Gender, 3) First Event, 4) Parental Involvement, 5) Lifestyle, 6) Empathy, and 7) Collective Identity. Two major unexpected themes also emerged and are also discussed in the next section: 1) Problems with movement and 2) Intersectionality. Problems with the movement are discussed because it affected participants’ ability to remain active in the movement, and intersectionality is reported because it provides a unique perspective to the animal rights movement that could have major implications for future research.

Chapter 3: Research Findings

The research findings are presented in accordance with this study's three main research questions: 1) What early childhood or distal factors do participants report as being important in influencing them to become involved in the animal rights movement in the first place? 2) What current or proximal factors do participants report as being important in influencing them to remain involved in the animal rights movement? 3) Are there similarities and/or differences in these distal and/or proximal factors between animal rights and dis/ability rights older youth activists? In addition, throughout the coding process, two unexpected themes (e.g., problems with the movement and intersectionality) were noted and these are presented at the end. For the sake of clarity, ellipses used in the quotes are for brevity.

First Research Question: What early childhood or distal factors do participants report as being important in influencing them to become involved in the animal rights movement in the first place?

As anticipated, the following themes highlight the influences that participants reported as being important for becoming involved in the animal rights movement: 1) Education, 2) Gender, 3) Lifestyle, 4) Parental Involvement, 5) First Event, and 6) Empathy.

Education. All the animal rights participants either held a degree (bachelor or graduate degree) or were finishing their current degree in university, and two of the participants discussed education as a contributing factor for motivating them to join the animal rights movement.

Cassandra: Throughout my university career and when I was in high school I was concerned about various social justice causes; I was worried about animals. And it

was in my third year of university that I was introduced to a group that protested slaughterhouses.

Specifically, all animal rights participants discussed the courses they took and the influence of professors in shaping their activist lifestyle.

Kiwi Jones: That happened when I first came to university, I was always interested in animal rights but I didn't learn about animal rights and I didn't participate in any activism for animal rights before coming here... I came to the university for the critical animal studies program so I came here to educate myself on my animal rights interests... So learning about this was one of the most empowering things in the world because I was like now I see that this isn't just me and these people aren't just coming up with random stuff because, "oh our hearts care about the animals."

Nina also discussed a similar path after taking critical animal studies classes in university:

Nina: When I came to university and started taking critical animal studies that I started to shift my thinking into, "I'm not doing enough..." From this I had a couple of influential professors that started to make me think about things theoretically and in terms of activism... It's been progressively more and more me learning about different industries and wanting to speak out and not just sit on the sidelines knowing that this stuff is happening and no one is doing anything about it.

Gender. The participants in this study discussed the reasons why women are more likely to participate in animal rights activism as compared with men. The theme of gender norms was stated as a reason the animal rights movement sees the participation of more women than men. Since gender is a social construction, each person's unique environment influences whether a woman or man is likely to participate in animal rights. Five of the six participants emphasized how men are taught to repress their emotions, which might help to explain why some men do not participate in the movement.

Kiwi Jones: One reason probably has to do with societal ideas of masculinity and femininity. Men are brought up to not be too emotional and in a way they're taught to turn off their emotions and if they do have an emotional reaction at a young age they may have been taught to turn that off. They're taught not to be emotional. I

think maybe it's not even a conscious reaction that when an emotion touches you, you learn to turn it off.

Nina also described a similar reasoning for why men do not participate in animal rights activism:

Nina: That feeling where you want to make sure you have empathy and have compassion for others – which is a very healthy way of communicating – men are not encouraged to show that and if they do they're seen as they must be gay or they must be emasculated in some way which is horrible.

Interestingly, Turtle stated that for males to participate they must begin to question the current gender norms surrounding masculinity and femininity:

Turtle: Animal rights activists are seen as being caring and that is a motherly attribute not a masculine trait so we just have to disrupt these things and have to maybe help men in overcoming these gendered insecurities... start doing animal rights activism it's kind of seen as a threat to your masculinity. So this is why it needs to go hand in hand, if you don't have a problem with traditional assumptions and expectations and gender roles it's unlikely that you will end up being an animal rights activist. You have to have a problem with what's being ascribed to you as a man.

Lifestyle. Five of the six animal rights participants in this study identified themselves vegans and described their process of going vegan as an influential factor for becoming involved in the animal rights movement. For four of the participants, transitioning to a vegan diet occurred prior to becoming an activist. The fifth participant was influenced to go vegan by a significant other after he was already involved in the animal rights movement. These participants reported that they sought out becoming vegetarian or vegan through early exposure to animal suffering or through an inherent love of animals.

Kiwi Jones: Before then [going vegetarian] I still cared about animal rights I just didn't translate that to my own actions. At 14 I went vegetarian and I started

getting a lot more vocal about animal rights because people were asking me why I was vegetarian and I was telling them it was because we shouldn't kill animals.

Caitlyn summed up the thought process of all the participants by stating:

Caitlyn: I am a vegan, so basically every time that I eat or make a choice of what I'm going to eat, I know that that is a very small amount of activism but it still counts in the big picture.

Parental involvement. For three of the six animal rights participants, parents (and guardians) played a vital role in shaping whether they felt supported or faced hardships when converting to an animal rights perspective and lifestyle. Since four of the participants transitioned to a vegan diet prior to being able to buy food and cook for themselves, the role of the family was essential in helping these young activists be successful in their dietary choices. Turtle discussed specific hardships he faced when trying to explain his position to his mother:

Turtle: She for some reason thought my politics were kind of against her because we disagreed on every single thing so when I was going vegan she sort of saw this as something I did to her. I do remember her saying stuff like, "what did I do to you?" and, "why are you doing this to me?" I just couldn't comprehend it but you know she was very resistant, I mean she's still resistant, like every time we talk on the phone she is always bringing up veganism and says, "you're probably unhealthy". She has become more accommodating like when I visit she tried to have vegan stuff after a while.

Caitlyn reported how she initially had to discuss her plan to become vegan with her mom due to monetary concerns:

Caitlyn: My mom was supportive of the activism but not so much the vegetarian diet. The only reason for that was we were on a fixed income so she just thought buying other foods that she wasn't used to might be expensive and it would put us in a bad financial situation.

In contrast, Nina shared how her mom had adopted similar beliefs to her about the animal rights movement despite her initial resistance:

Nina: I was kind of raised that way. My parents were already in that line of thinking before I was even born. I never really had a lot of animal products except maybe cheese pizza. My parents were very adamant not to buy milk and things like that so it wasn't difficult... When I decided I needed to become vegan I tried to tell my mom because I know she's more in line with it and although she was a little bit resistant as most people are eventually she got on board and now she's almost as radical as I am.

Having parental support helped animal rights activists in their transition to the animal rights lifestyle, and growing up with activist influences (either animal rights or other) acted as an environmental influence to help shape participant's future participation in activist causes.

First event. Five of the six young animal rights participants identified a time in their past when something happened that started them on the path to animal rights activism. These first events tended to be salient and emotionally charged and resonated with participants long after the event had occurred. For example, one participant, Turtle, expressed that his first event happened as a child when he had to bear witness to a cultural festival that sacrificed animals:

Turtle: Since I was a child I always said that I loved animals and my mom is a self-identified animal lover. As I was born and raised in Turkey, we have a celebration called the Feast of Sacrifice and I always had a problem with that... I was never okay with that. I was always calling people out and criticizing them when I was a kid.

Caitlyn recalled her employment with a slaughterhouse, which was a first event that was personal in nature and that led to the realization that she needed to become active in the animal rights movement:

Caitlyn: I did it [worked in a slaughterhouse] for three summers in a row until I was nineteen years old. It was awful, the first few summers. I was just kind of blind to it and thinking that this is the way we get our food, this is okay. I'd been eating meat since I was born so how could there be anything wrong with this... As soon as I quit the job and walked out on my last day I just started googling things and PETA was a great resource at the time.

On a positive note, another participant, Jane, was encouraged to develop her own values to support and care for animals and the environment. Her participation in a yearly folk festival inspired her to further her activist commitment:

Jane: I grew up going to this folk music festival that was organized by Pete Seeger. I've been going there since I was a baby, since my entire life, and although I've missed a few years here and there, as a kid growing up in that environment with people like Pete Seeger to look up to, that's really instilled in me these values and so it's basically since before I can remember this is what my lifestyle was.

In summary, for five of the six participants, exposure to both negative and positive experiences either in early childhood or later in life was enough to get them thinking about animal rights in a way that translated to eventual advocacy and activism. For some participants, however, the very notion of animal rights seemed inherent, and even from their earliest childhood memories they reported that they protected animals from danger and/or were advocating for the rights of animals even when other people did not seem to share their sentiments.

Empathy. Three of the six animal rights participants stated that the reason they recalled a first event was specifically because they had an emotionally charged response to the event such as witnessing or learning about animal cruelty and suffering.

Kiwi Jones: I think that's a huge reason why I'm so into it because I like animals, I just have a soft spot for animals, I think they're really cool. Not everyone really likes animals that much. I think the fact that I get really excited around an animal has to do with why I'm so into it so it's an emotional kind of attachment.

Cassandra also discussed how it was this initial love of animals and concern for other social justice issues such as environmentalism that shaped her beliefs:

Cassandra: From a young age I always cared about animals since I was very little, always drawing pictures of animals, always being like very fascinated with animals and the environment and wanting to help the environment and just like being concerned about various social justice causes and just wanting to make the world a better place.

An inherent love of animals was commonly discussed among five of the six animal rights participants. Feeling emotionally connected to the well-being of animals was a strong enough emotion that empathy was reported as a theme that shaped older youth's initial engagement in the animal rights movement.

Second Research Question: What current or proximal factors do participants report as being important in influencing them to remain involved in the animal rights movement?

The following themes highlight the current influences that participants reported as being important for their continued involvement in animal rights: 1) Education, 2) Lifestyle, 3) Empathy, and 4) Collective identity. To note, though it was not initially anticipated, at times participants discussed these themes in terms of their ethical-political motivations.

Education. Interestingly, three out of six participants reported that the motivation to remain involved in the movement stemmed from their ability to recruit and educate members of the public. Jane discussed how her drive to remain involved is stronger when she can help recruit through educating:

Jane: It's not enough for me to be an activist, I feel like part of being an activist is also being compassionate of people, and educating. Sometimes people will say the wrong thing because they just don't know.

Caitlyn understood that passing judgment on someone who is ignorant of important animal rights issues would not benefit the movement. She discussed education as a way of remaining involved by talking about these important issues with people who may not fully understand the implications:

Caitlyn: Education is key, because just animal cruelty as an example will not motivate everybody because not everybody cares about animals... you have to ask people really, what do you actually care about? There are people who are environmentalists who actually don't know that mass production of livestock and factory farming contributes to 80% of greenhouse gas emissions.

Interestingly, Caitlyn discusses the animal rights movement with people who are not interested in animal rights by reframing the argument to what her audience is interested in. If people are not animal rights activists but are interested in the environment, Caitlyn discussed that she would alter her argument to show how animal exploitation negatively harms the environment.

Lifestyle. All the animal rights activists reported using veganism and the promotion of veganism to remain involved in the community and to actively practice their activism in a personal way. Caitlyn stated how this is true for her, and how just being vegan is a positive motivator to both remain in the movement and help recruit people who are interested:

Caitlyn: I think that since I've been a vegan for so long it's definitely something that is good for me so I can be an advocate for people eating less meat, which I think is a more important movement... while we should focus on the cruelty and the health and safety standards and all these violations that are being broken that led to animal suffering in the first place, the biggest thing is the consumption of meat itself, which is why all of these standards are not being practiced.

Turtle also elaborated how getting people onboard with the vegan diet is what helps keep him motivated:

Turtle: When I talk to non-vegan people or not animal rights activists, I ask them why they're not vegan or why they're not animal rights activists. Why aren't they involved in the movement and most of the answers are about, "vegans are like this, or vegans are like that", or, "activists do this or they do that," and I say well this isn't about us, this isn't about humans, this is about the animals so that's what keeps me going I would say.

Three out of six participants focused heavily on the argument of "this is not about us" and provided solutions for educating non-members about the harm of a meat-eating diet. The promotion of this lifestyle choice was not just a way of sharing participant's ethico-political motivations, but was a self-monitoring behavioural tactic participants used to remain involved in the animal rights movement. Educating non-members about the benefits of a vegan diet (e.g., for health and environmental reasons) was touted as a key influence for participant's continued support of the movement.

Empathy. Empathy played a vital role when participants discussed the influences keeping them involved in the movement. In direct comparison with how the participants handled their emotions when they first engaged in the animal rights movement, there was an overall shift from a very emotional response to one of logic and reason.

Nina: For me personally, both. I would say when I first started it was definitely more emotional and "I don't want to hurt animals", right? And that's how it's always been my whole life and is certainly the case now. But as I've received more schooling and I've started to learn about intersections that are happening in terms of human rights violations you have to come at it with a strong argumentation. Not just because it's more persuasive but also because it's important to be rational, factual, and logical because these are actual things that are happening in the world.

Kiwi Jones emphasized that a rational approach to the animal rights movement is necessary because of past experiences. She clarifies that not everyone cares about animals the way she does:

Kiwi Jones: It's pretty important because it's really interesting because I try to always be really logical about this kind of thing because I guess I've had a lot of people shoot it down for a long time with "we don't care about animals, we don't care about animals" so I've kind of convinced myself that not a lot of people actually care about it from an emotional perspective.

Similarly, Jane reported using a logical approach because she determines what is important based on whether it is the right thing to do:

Jane: I know a lot of animal rights activists are very viscerally motivated into animal rights and I've never been that way. I'm very, "I should do this because it's the right thing to do," and then I will just make myself do that thing. I think it's more of a logical thing, it's like OK this is a list of issues I could care about and what makes sense for me to care about.

The contradiction between logic and emotion was something that three out of the six participants struggled with. For some, they felt that being influenced by their emotions with an empathetic response was the best strategy for them to remain involved in animal rights activism. However, three of the six participants reported using logic since it allowed for a rational discussion about the true implications of animal exploitation.

Collective identity. Three out of the six participants discussed how the movement itself was not an influential factor for joining or staying involved in the activist cause. Participants stated that feeling a sense of collective identity was not important and did not affect how they participated in the movement. Turtle stated:

Turtle: I mean the movement doesn't encourage me to keep participating, I will say that. The movement isn't my reason. I think the movement has a lot of problems and all of these problems are very urgent and need fixing but it's the cause, it's what the movement is for is what keeps me going.

Nina also emphasized how the movement was not important to her participation:

Nina: When it comes to the movement I don't participate in it because I believe in the cause and it's not so much that I want to use it as a socializing event even though I have many friends in the movement. It's not that I'm motivated because of other people; I'm motivated for the animals in this case.

In contrast, Kiwi Jones stated how a feeling of collective identity is beneficial for motivation:

Kiwi Jones: You're doing something and you're surrounded by people who believe what you believe in and all these energies come together and if I'm able to have a productive conversation with someone then I can leave feeling pretty great.

Five of the six animal rights participants did not feel that having a collective identity was necessary to be successful in the animal rights movement. For them, the motivation to continue being an active participant stemmed from the message they were trying to convey to their audience and not from engaging with likeminded individuals about certain important issues. However, one participant outlined how her mood was positively affected by the feeling of being around people who all believe in the same message

Third Research Question: Are there similarities and/or differences in the distal and/or proximal factors between animal rights and dis/ability rights older youth activists?

Interestingly, regarding distal and/or proximal themes, key differences and similarities emerged between youth engaged in animal and dis/ability rights activism. The following five themes emerged as being key influences associated with participation in animal and dis/ability rights activism: 1) Collective Identity, 2) First Event, 3) Parental Involvement, 4) Empathy, and 5) Gender.

Collective identity. There was a divide between animal rights activists as to whether the identity of being an activist mattered. For example, some participants claimed feeling a sense of camaraderie with other members in the movement, whereas others said that they were not motivated at all by a collective mindset across members. However, four out of the six dis/ability rights activists reported that feeling like a community and taking on that role was integral to their success in the movement. For example, Dori discussed how dealing with the pitfalls of activism by being able to turn to likeminded individuals and parents helped her a lot:

Dori: I'm advocating with people involved with the community; typically parents or community workers who have a passion about it so we're with a bunch of people who have the same passion and same feelings and same experiences it's easier to participate... I mean I love animal rights as well, I'm a huge animal rights person too because I'm such a huge animal lover but, I think because with, in the autism community in particular, we are all fighting the same fight and we all want the same thing so there's no one who's more important or who has a different agenda.

Kev also discussed:

Kev: For me this is almost natural because this is the community that I came out of. I was the underserved, disadvantaged and it's funny because my undergrad sort of alienated me from you know this region's community and now I'm getting back into and it's just meeting some of the community is amazing... When you give, a lot of other people will also give and help you get there.

It is evident that there are differences between the motivations to both become and remain involved in social activism between youth engaged in animal and dis/ability rights activism. The cohesion that dis/ability rights participants discussed between members suggests that, for these participants, being surrounded by likeminded individuals with similar goals helped them to stay active. In contrast, five of the six youth engaged in animal rights activism reported that while they understood why collective identity was

important, it was not important in influencing them personally to remain involved in the movement.

First Event. Three out of six dis/ability rights participants experienced a first event like that of the youth engaged in animal rights activists. However, in their case, the first event focused on the individual experiencing a form of hardship or reaching out to other people with disabilities. For example, Christine began to advocate for autism awareness after her parents fostered her younger brother, “specifically my parents do foster care and my youngest foster brother is living with autism, so advocating for him has been a part of my life for the last 15 years.” Kev began to advocate as a child when he played on a sports team that welcomed children who had diverse mental and physical disabilities:

Kev: The commissioners of the league would place all the children managing a variety of physical and mental disabilities on our team. So pretty much from age 8 to 18, we were playing competitively but you know arguably we took a non-competitive approach to organized sports and the only reason we won every year with our members was because we learned to work together and pick up on everybody’s strengths so really it started by being 10 years old and having a great model like my dad treating these individuals, these players no different than he was treating us and that went a long way.

Paul reported having personally experienced a mental health crisis that allowed him to see the state of mental health advocacy and this convinced him that he needed to do extra:

Paul: I ended up in serious crisis a few years back and fortunately at that time that board had another vacancy and were going to consider my application and I was appointed to the board and in that small way, in essence, saved my life in a lot of ways. It gave me a critical sense of purpose as I was going through this massive crisis.

Dori had grown up with a family very much in support of dis/ability rights; however, it was not until she had a child with autism that she felt the need to advocate on a personal level:

Dori: Think I always had compassion for those with disability because I grew up with it but I think after having a child with disabilities I think my interest and my knowledge became more prevalent, I became more involved because I was personally experiencing things.

All participants in the study reported that a connection with the movement was made prior to becoming political in the fight for equality. For animal rights participants, an inherent love of animals or an incident that made them question the status quo influenced them to eventually participate in the animal rights movement. However, for youth engaged in disability rights activism, either being diagnosed with a mental or physical disability or knowing someone with a mental or physical disability is what initially inspired all of the participants to seek out advocacy work.

Parental involvement. One of the distinguished differences between the dis/ability and animal rights participant groups is the theme of parental involvement and support. Three out of the six youth engaged in animal rights activism discussed that their parents and friends initially had issues when they transitioned to veganism and began advocating for animal rights. However, all of the six youth engaged in dis/ability rights activism reported having support from their parents and friends without hesitation. Kev discussed how his family influenced who he is today:

Kev: My dad was a union leader so he was always fighting for workers' rights, my grandfather was a principal for years, was the first one to get free school equipment all the students pens and things like that so there are lots these influences and it was sort of surrounded by me, surrounding me and you know I think, you know in sports growing up we lead by example.

Dori's family had worked with disabilities since she was a young child:

Dori: I think being someone who has a child with disability and I've always been exposed to disability, my dad's brother has down syndrome and when I was little

my mom used to work in a home and would bring adults with developmental disabilities to visit and I've always kind of been exposed to that.

Supportive family members and friends allowed for the dis/ability rights participants to be able to advocate for themselves or others without much judgment (at least from direct friends and family members).

Empathy. Similar to the youth engaged in animal rights activism, five older youth engaged in dis/ability rights activism approached disability rights with both an emotional and logical perspective. Dori stated that she is particularly emotional about the movement when she is advocating for her son:

Dori: Yeah, I get emotional especially depending what I'm talking about; I think if I'm advocating for my son, emotions tend to come out and I think sometimes when people see the emotion and see the crying they understand the desperation and say yeah, this is real. I think in general if it's not me personally advocating, in general, it's more effective to deal in education, logical. You don't want to come off as angry.

Kev also talked about how he is affected by the work that he does every single day:

Kev: Yeah it's interesting so you know I'll have an emotional response and then that'll then push me to draw or paint or create a song and then you know that song may then you know come into the research piece. I am driven by my emotional responses from what I do on a daily basis and it's good and bad.

On the other hand, the need for a rational approach was also widely cited as necessary for becoming and remaining involved in the movement. Participants stated the need to adopt a rational approach when educating and talking to people about dis/ability rights, especially if the goal is to ensure their continued motivation to participate in the movement. Katie discussed:

Katie: I think I try to talk to people from a more logical or educational perspective. If I'm advocating in general, for disability in general, for change in general then yes, education and logical perspective and explain the process, issues, you know

what we know research wise tends to be easier for other people to understand, they get a better understanding of where we're coming from and why we're doing what we're doing.

Gender. Similar to the case for participation in animal rights activism, gender norms were also reported as being relevant to understanding participation in the dis/ability rights movement. For example, the dis/ability rights movement is characterized by more women than man. However, different reasons were reported as to why this might be the case. Dori explained why she believes, at least for the autism advocacy groups, why women are so prevalent in the movement:

Dori: Female. So I think, as a mother, it generally falls on the mother to care for a child with autism. I know there are fathers that are involved and I'm not discounting that in any way but generally speaking it is the mothers who deal with their child, it is the mothers who care for them, take them to appointments, who deal with the education system, who deal with community services, who deal with IBI. They're the ones dealing with all these appointments and therapies and so I think that it's that mama bear thing where it's generally the mom and if something's not happening it's the mom who's going to speak out.

Katie also stressed that the ones who seem to be interested in the club she runs on her university campus all seem to be education majors, which are dominated by female members:

Katie: We could go into the whole gender thing and stereotypical females. Everyone in the club is currently majoring in Education so being stereotypical, members of that major tend to be female; especially in my major where it is predominantly female. It's actually so disappointing how many females there are, I want there to be more males. I believe that the department needs to do more to get males in the department. If I were the chair right now, that's what I would be doing because it's so frustrating because I want guys in my classes.

Two of the six dis/ability rights activists in this study reported different reasons to explain why women are often more present in activism than males. A very important point

discussed by Dori was that women as caretakers and mothers are generally likely to be advocating for their children than men. This could explain why, for advocates for autism education and support, more women are involved. Additionally, like animal rights activists, stereotypical gender norms were also cited for why men are not as involved in the dis/ability movement.

Unexpected Findings in the Animal Rights Movement that Underscore Changes in Activism

Throughout the interviews, two unexpected themes emerged to explain important changes in how people participate in activism: 1) Problems in Movement, and 2) Intersectionality.

Problems with the animal rights movement. Problems within the animal rights movement was an unexpected finding as none of the interview questions sought to explore if there were any problematic issues within the movement. However, when asked a question about their collective identity, all six of the animal rights activists discussed the problems that affected their ability to stay involved in the movement. The following four subthemes emerged: 1) Privilege, 2) Elitism, 3) *Hero Mentality*, and 4) Gender Violence.

Privilege. A prevalent theme of privilege, specifically white privilege, was mentioned by four of the six participants. Animal rights activism is dominated by white people (according to past literature; Lowe & Ginsberg, 2002; Plous, 1991), and for some, this was a substantial problem for the future of the movement. Participants addressed white people overriding the voices of marginalized groups who are interested in joining the activist cause. Caitlyn discussed how the movement tends to fixate on veganism and that it fails to address the need for inclusion of different races:

Caitlyn: Most of these animal rights groups are filled with white people. I find naturally, other races and ethnicities might be, might feel, like it's exclusionary because of that and maybe a lot of people in the animal rights community aren't focused on racism or don't take in their white privilege. I mean that's really important but it's just not something that they're concerned about because they're so caught up in being vegan.

Turtle discussed how he feels he himself is privileged and how the idea of socioeconomic status may affect how people participate in the movement:

Turtle: I know that marginalized people can be more reluctant speaking out because privileged people can easily shut them down and they're used to being shut down by privileged people and I am one of those privileged people, I believe... An overwhelming majority of animal advocates in the west, in the global north, are white. Overwhelming majority.

Inclusion is a very important aspect of a successful social justice movement, and exploiting privilege and not including the voices of all members of the group were reported as problems within the movement that hinders the animal rights message.

Elitism. Participants also discussed the problem of elitism, especially when it came to promoting the vegan lifestyle. Caitlyn likened the veganism movement to a cult, discussing that the need to be vegan and the need to be a better vegan than everyone else, halted her involvement in the groups closest to her in physical proximity:

Caitlyn: It's a very elitist group I found, so yeah, I kind of stopped involving myself in that about 2 years ago... it's becoming more of a cult than an actual movement for animals. People are like holier than thou because they're so vegan and so cruelty free when they still drive cars and eat produce with pesticides used on it... you're not going to recruit people that way, people are not going to listen to you because you can't change your whole world.

Hero mentality. *Hero mentality* was also reported as a huge problem that affected every social justice movement, especially the animal rights movement. Cassandra noted

that despite much of the work being done by females, males generally end up taking a lot of the credit for any strides made in the success of the movement's message:

Cassandra: In my experience the majority of people in animal rights organizing are women who care about animals, mostly white women but still women. But the people who ascend to the highest positions, even in the smaller communities, in comparison to the worldwide community that I've been in, the most outspoken people in the community and the people who ascended really quickly to leadership positions were always white men, cis [gender identity that matches the sex category assigned at birth] men to be specific... it makes the white cis men the most visible ones and it gives them this sense of heroism, it's like, this super *hero mentality* among white men who participate in these direct actions and I was like yup I know some people in my community who are like that. They're like living out this childhood superhero fantasy.

However, Turtle also described the *hero mentality* as one that can potentially affect everyone, men and women alike:

Turtle: In a lot of forms of activism, but especially in animal liberation, there is this problem of the "saviour" or the "*hero mentality*". Like I'm so noble that I'm doing this for others. Well I do think we need some sort of modesty and this is especially true because I think in the society we live in regardless of who you are or your political views or what form of activism you do we are all complicit in animal suffering.

Violence. Generally, issues within a movement can be resolved with communication and discussion about the current problems affecting the movement and their members. For some, however, the issues begin to affect safety and directly impact willingness to continue participating in the movement, and this is nicely discussed by Jane, "and there's a lot of problems with gender violence which is why I'm kind of hesitant of being involved in [the animal rights movement]." Caitlyn also discussed how members of the group were subjected to shocking displays of sexual harassment:

Caitlyn: There have been accounts of sexual harassment made by males in the movement towards the females. They probably feel like the females are vulnerable

already and emotional so they're like, "oh, let me support you," and then they end up getting sexually harassed.

For Cassandra, however, the experience was personal and she talked about being harassed by a man in the movement. The ordeal was so traumatizing, she distanced herself from the community groups around her because of it:

Cassandra: I'd say the most glaring incident that pushed me away from the movement the most was being harassed by an older man who has history of harassing young women in the animal rights movement... I feel it affects the movement really negatively, sometimes honestly I wish cis men could just be banned from it. It's not just with animal rights; I feel that it is that way in a lot of activist communities.

Intersectionality. The most surprising finding was that all six of the youth engaged in animal rights activism stated the need for intersectionality and a shift to a global citizenship perspective. Initially there were concerns with the term intersectionality, as Nina discussed that having a group that is intersectional might take away from the overall message the group is trying to convey:

Nina: That's the problem too is I think that a lot of issues around animal rights don't get brought to the forefront as much because we are prioritizing the intersectional aspect of it. Which I'm not saying is unimportant but to also make sure we are looking at the animals as well. And talking about the things that happen to animals. Aside from how other social justice issues integrate with it, we should still be talking about animal rights because they matter too.

Kiwi Jones started to believe in intersectionality after people accused her of neglecting human rights in favour of animal rights:

Kiwi Jones: In terms of comments that have stuck with me and made me really think about my own choices, comments such as accusing it [veganism] of abusing human rights, those ones really stuck with me. The more research I've done the more I've realized veganism is actually really supportive of human rights... even just the more general idea that you can only care about a certain number of issues, so by caring about animal rights you're neglecting human rights... The first time I

heard it kind of made me step back and feel a little guilty like I was doing something wrong.

Turtle began to research intersectionality when he was first getting involved:

Turtle: The idea of intersectionality wasn't very popular so I was reading more and making inferences to speciesism and animal exploitation and stuff but sometimes it's intuitional you just make these connections yourself. I do remember myself starting to think and talk to people about how we always talk about freedom, we always talk about equality, and we always talk about these concepts in the human context so how does it look like in a larger context. How does freedom look like for non-human animals? How does equality look like for non-human animals? So I believe that other causes that I was passionate about helped me build these connections.

In conclusion, Caitlyn summed up the need for intersectionality in the movement:

Caitlyn: It's very hard to talk about in isolation and I think what's important that like sometimes a lot of animal advocates don't understand that the oppressions are related to each other but then they aren't the same...they 100% need to be related to each other, especially in terms of animal cruelty because humans who are committing these acts of animal cruelty and I think that is a much deeper issue. Having everything included into one movement is extremely important... I think that animal rights can exist separately from human issues but I don't think that they should.

Conclusion. All of the participants in this study provided very meaningful responses to the three research questions. All seven factors identified in past research were revealed as being important factors in this study as well. Similarly, the interview response of youth engaged in animal rights and dis/ability rights activism revealed similarities and differences in relation to the seven themes. Unexpected themes were also revealed that explain some of the current challenges (i.e., problems with the movement) and benefits (i.e., intersectionality) that participants experience in the animal rights movement.

Chapter 4: Discussion

This study explored some of the early childhood (i.e., distal) and current (i.e., proximal) influences that older youth perceive to be important in shaping their personal life course toward becoming and remaining involved in the animal rights movement. Altogether, twelve older youth who identified as being involved in either animal rights activism (both a linear and fluid movement; 6 participants) or dis/ability rights activism (a linear movement; 6 participants) participated in an in-depth interview. Both similarities and differences in the seven distal and proximal themes were noted between youth engaged in animal and dis/ability rights activism and these are discussed below. Recall the three main research questions: 1) What early childhood or distal themes do participants report as being important in influencing them to become involved in the animal rights movement in the first place? 2) What current or proximal themes do participants report as being important in influencing them to remain involved in the animal rights movement? 3) Are there similarities and/or differences in these distal and/or proximal themes between animal rights and dis/ability rights older youth activists?

Early Childhood and Current Influences for Participation in Animal Rights

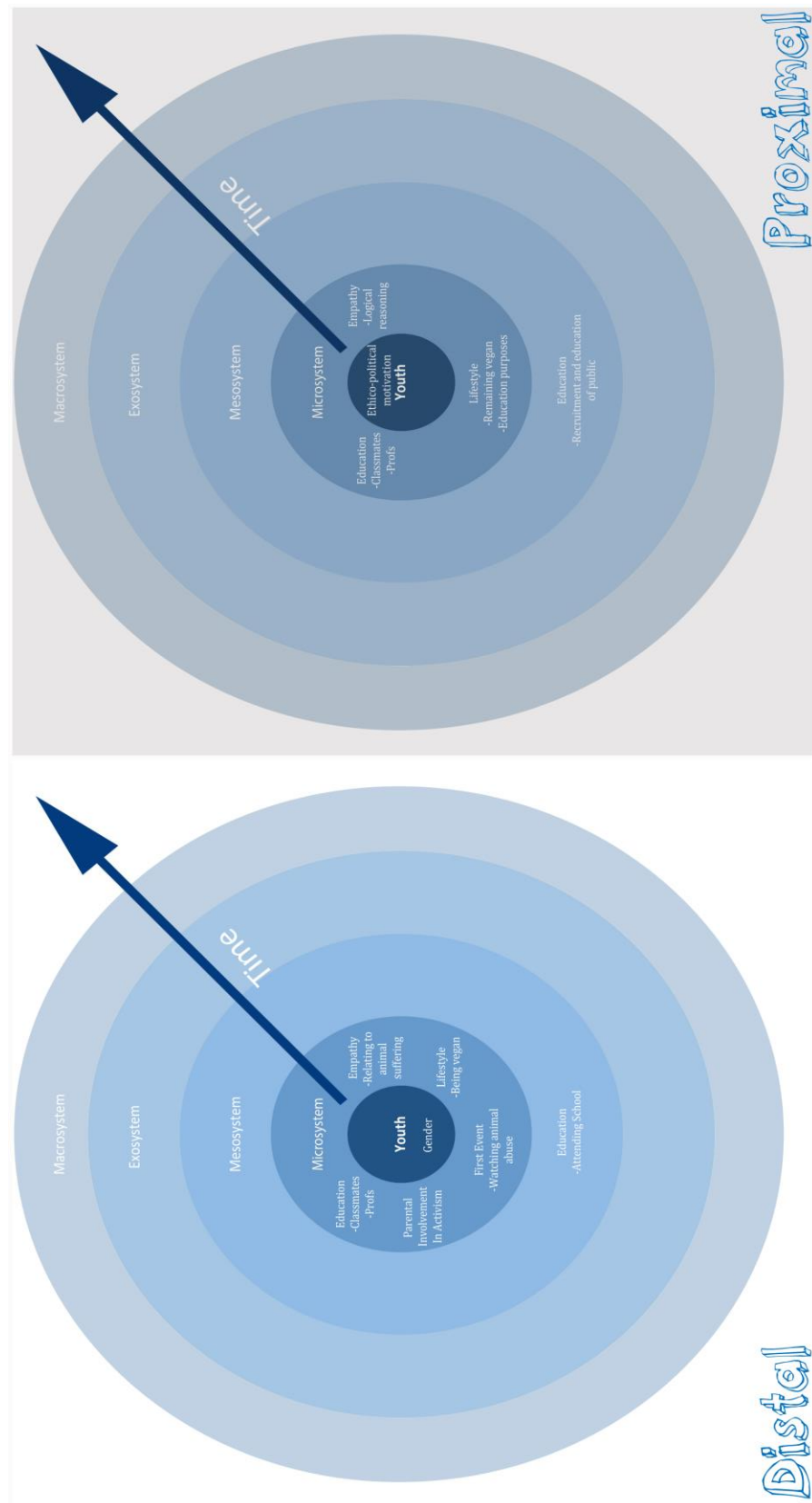
Activism: Main Findings.

Recall that in this study Bronfenbrenner's PPCT model was applied to conceptualise and understand the environmental and personal factors that influence involvement in the animal rights movement, with a focus on two distinct time periods. First, retrospective reporting on early childhood (i.e., distal) was selected as the first time period as Bronfenbrenner's model focuses on the significance of early environmental and personal influences on future behaviour (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). Past research in

animal rights proposes that early childhood is a critical time for learning about, and becoming interested in, animal welfare (Herzog, 1993; Pallotta, 2005). Second, older youth have matured brain development in the pre-frontal cortex associated with reasoning and advanced cognition; due to this, discussing current influences allows for participants to better speak to their involvement in the social movement (Kolb et al., 2012). During childhood and adolescence, individuals are becoming aware of important social issues, political institutions, and problems in the community (Flanagan & Levine, 2010; Flanagan & Sherrod, 1998). Currently, older youth can consider the kind of world in which they wish to live, and important issues become salient moral and political concerns.

The seven distal and proximal themes discussed in the qualitative interviews were both environmental and personal influences that older youth reported as being important for becoming and remaining engaged in the animal rights movement. Distally, participants reported that education, gender, first events, parental involvement, lifestyle, and empathy were significant themes in becoming an animal rights activist. Proximally, participants reported that education, lifestyle, empathy, and collective identity were significant themes in remaining an animal rights activist. These themes are discussed below.

Figure 4. Distal and proximal research findings in Bronfenbrenner's PPCT model.



Education. Past research has shown that education is important for generating interest in social activist causes (Gaarder, 2008; Jamison, 1998; Lowe & Ginsberg, 2002). Children become aware of social issues and problems through discussions in school and by consuming media (Flanagan & Sherrod, 1998; Hart & Kirshner, 2009). These children, who then attend post-secondary, are being exposed to specific courses and extracurricular activities (e.g., community-based research, political discourse, community events) that strengthen beliefs and motivations in social interests. For example, in-depth studies show that the ambitious courses that students take often analyze and address social issues, which lead to increased engagement in social activist commitments (Beaumont, Ehrlich, & Corngold, 2007). Courses and extracurricular activities are developed to educate older youth about the harm of the animal exploitation industry (Herzog, 1993; Oesterle et al., 2004; Lowe & Ginsberg, 2002).

Recall that it was expected that participants would report education as being influential in shaping their early and continued participation in animal rights activism. Participants reported education as an important distal theme for becoming involved in the animal rights movement. Three out of the six animal rights participants reported that educators and specific educational courses offered in post-secondary discussed animal rights as a viable movement that warranted participation. Courses that focused on critical animal studies influenced participation in local groups and causes dedicated to protesting slaughterhouses and animal testing on campus. This finding is consistent with Bronfenbrenner's theory on the micro- and meso-system; the university is considered an immediate setting as participants spend approximately four years immersed in this environment. If previous beliefs are supported by this university setting this can influence

individual interest and involvement in the animal rights movement (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). Research studies on the influence of education suggest that being exposed to diverse viewpoints and fostering a better understanding of current world issues teaches students about the severity of certain issues (Nguyen & Gasman, 2015). Nguyen and Gasman (2015) studied the Asian American Movement and looked at how current course offerings reflected increased tolerance for different groups; the students in their study were likely to counter dominant racial and stereotypical narratives.

Participants reported proximal drives to remain involved in the animal rights movement. Three out of six participants discussed the need to promote the movement using education to remain informed of animal rights issues and to educate non-members about a passionate cause. By sharing their own values and beliefs that were supported through their education, participants reported that they could educate people who either were not previously aware of animal issues or who vehemently protested animal rights as a viable movement. In this sense, the participants in this study took an active role by discussing the movement with non-members to remain involved in animal rights.

One of the implications is that education as an environmental influence may change over time. Older youth initially discussed education as a key method to learn about animal rights issues and become involved in the movement. However, established activists used education to remain involved in the movement through educating non-members. Additionally, the interaction between the school setting and older youth provides an interesting reflection through Bronfenbrenner's PPCT model; in this way, older youth activists are being affected by their environment as well as changing their environment to reflect the current ways they participate in activism. Future research should examine if

schools may be able to promote this early interest in social activist causes by educating children about persistent global issues.

Gender. The second theme explored in this study was gender, which Bronfenbrenner posited as a demand characteristic (i.e., immediate stimuli to other people such as age, gender, and physical appearance; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). It was expected that this study would include more women than men as women participate in the animal rights movement in higher percentages (Gaarder, 2008; Herzog, 1995; Pallotta, 2005). In this study, 66% of the animal rights participants identified as female and 75% of both animal rights and dis/ability rights youth identified as female. This finding is consistent with past literature that suggests female participation in social activist causes ranges between 70 – 100% (Jasper & Poulsen, 1995).

Despite this understanding of participant demographics, research has not addressed the reasons why more females and fewer males become involved in social activism (with the exception of a few studies that suggest that men are active in political activism such as lobbying and sitting on boards; Coe et al., 2013; Osawa, 2015). Participants in this study were asked why they believed men do not participate in animal rights activism. All the participants suggested the role that gender norms play in early socialization. When children are raised with expected gender norms (i.e., males only playing with monster trucks and females only playing with Barbies), this could influence their early and continued participation in animal rights activism. It becomes clear that males may find the idea of social activism a “feminine” issue. For men, the idea of advocating for emotional and sensitive causes might be problematic as men have been raised to mask their emotions. Although multiple masculinities exist and are socially constructed, many of them are

dependent on time, history, and culture (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006); however, there will always be one dominant masculinity (Connell & Connell, 2005).

Young men's engagement in social activist causes necessitates that these men reject stereotypical gender norms. Since gender is both a social construct and a demand characteristic (Bronfenbrenner, 1977), people are exposed to gender norms and gender expectations in every facet of life. Young men may feel uncomfortable supporting a cause that is viewed as sentimental and feminine (Adams, 2004; Ascione, 1997; Jasper & Poulsen, 1995); typical gender norms and expectations must be addressed for young men to feel comfortable participating. Since fewer men participate in social activism and its related research, understanding why they do not participate is speculative. However, in this study two men expressed their rejection of stereotypical gender norms. This study's findings illustrate the serious gender imbalance in social movement research, and provide a brief outline as to why males are not as active in animal rights activism.

Lifestyle. Past research has proposed that a lifestyle change (i.e., meat-eating diet to vegan/vegetarian diet) precedes involvement in activist participation (Herzog, 1993; Pallotta, 2005, 2008). It is important to note that vegans/vegetarians are not always animal rights supporters and vice versa, however studies show that animal rights supporters are likely to practice the vegan lifestyle (Herzog, 1993; Herzog & Golden, 2009; Mika, 2006). In the study, it was suggested that participants would report that their commitment to the vegan lifestyle helped to influence their early and continued participation in animal rights activism.

Participants reported that the change to a vegan lifestyle was a distal influence in their life course in becoming an animal rights activist; five activists identified themselves

as vegan and recognized self-education and the consumption of media (e.g., documentaries, film, literature) as key influences in becoming vegan. Transitioning to a vegan diet for four of the six animal rights participants occurred prior to becoming an activist and a fifth participant was persuaded by a significant other after he was already involved in the movement. Participants elaborated on the role of the family during their initial conversion to the vegan lifestyle. The transition for four participants occurred in early childhood when they relied on parental support. According to Bronfenbrenner (1977), if the parents are unsupportive of the lifestyle, especially at an early age, this can cause problems if the home is not a setting in which the child feels secure (Pallotta, 2005); parents may cook non-vegan friendly meals, belittle the argument, and/or consume meat products. One participant stated that his family believed that the lifestyle was unhealthy, and he discussed that this made it harder for him to transition and caused negative tensions amongst family and friends. In contrast, four participants stated that their parents, friends, and family were supportive (i.e., parents educated themselves on the movement and its values, and agreed to cook vegan friendly meals).

Five animal rights participants noted proximal influences for remaining involved in the animal rights movement. For example, participants reported that they were positively influenced to remain involved in the movement by persuading non-members (i.e., either appealing to their love of animals or through some other venue) to become vegan as a way of educating people about the movement and allowing people to make an educated choice. These participants also mentioned that eating vegan in public was their individual and personal way (i.e., they did not connect this to a collective identity) of allowing non-

members to ask questions, and this strategy was beneficial to the movement and for their own continued motivation.

The theme of lifestyle uncovered in this study is consistent with past research findings and provides a way of exploring the timeline of participation in animal rights (Pallotta, 2005), with a vegetarian or vegan diet almost always preceding a decision to join an animal rights movement. An implication of this finding is that veganism is influential in participant's early and continued involvement in the animal rights movement; publicizing consumptive choices and making daily lifestyle choices in support of animal rights educated participants about important issues in a way to shape their future involvement. For participants' current involvement, publicizing consumptive choices were used to help educate non-members and was described to remain involved and active in the animal rights movement and lifestyle. This relationship between the individual and the environment may shift from self-education to using education of the vegan lifestyle as a motivation to remain involved.

Parental involvement. Past literature has not explored the influence of parental involvement in shaping early childhood participation in animal rights activism (aside from a few key pieces of literature; Forenza & Germak, 2015; Jasper & Poulsen, 1995). In a study by Forenza and Germak (2015), the environment in which a child is raised plays a critical role in influencing participation in activism. This is consistent with Bronfenbrenner's (1977) theory of the microsystem; Bronfenbrenner's theory posits that the influence of the immediate family is important as an environmental setting as children spend majority of the time in the home and familial values and beliefs will affect future behaviour (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). In contrast, Jasper and Poulsen (1995)

question the necessity of parental involvement as animal rights activists are self-motivated; it is evident that regardless of parental beliefs, older youth may still participate in activist commitments. In this study, it was expected that older youth would report a parent's involvement in a social movement – if their parent(s) were involved previously or currently – as influential to their early participation in animal rights.

Four out of the six animal rights participants elaborated on the vital role parents had in shaping their early participation in the movement. Two of the six participants discussed that their parent's values were not in-line with the beliefs of the animal activist movement, which led to conflict within the family. Participants were not able to discuss their activist lifestyle within the family without facing harsh criticism; interestingly, the conflict stemmed from parents who believed that the lifestyle was unhealthy and could not understand why a drastic change to diet needed to be accomplished. Two of the six participants faced hardships when converting to a vegan diet and when requiring support after first becoming involved in the movement. For two participants, parental involvement was discussed as being influential in shaping their own involvement in the animal rights movement; this strong impact was discussed despite both participants stating that their parents were not part of the animal rights movement. One of the two participants discussed that this shared belief system transcended the confines of each movement (i.e., the animal rights movement and the lifestyle choices her parents made). For her, having supportive parents who immersed her into the lifestyle from birth made it easier for her to discuss animal rights with her family and to receive support when she made the decision to go vegan.

These findings support both Forenza and Germak (2015) and Jasper and Poulsen's (1995) research findings. Older youth participated in the animal movement regardless if parents were supportive or unsupportive of the beliefs and values of the animal rights movement, although participants with unsupportive parents described difficulty associated with the transition. Since participants in this study were not required to have parents with similar activist motivations, these findings can only speculate on the importance of parental involvement. Future research should address this lack of research by conducting a comparative study that examines youth activist outcomes of parents who are and are not personally involved in an activist movement.

First event. Past research illustrates how a first event aids as an initial “shock” that influences engagement in animal rights activism among older youth (Jacobsson & Lindblom, 2013; Jasper & Poulsen, 1995). Extant literature suggests that the first event occurs at a young age when children are beginning to make sense of the world (Jasper & Poulsen, 1995). However, it cannot be overlooked that these “shocks” may also occur later in life (Forenza & Germak, 2015). For example, a young child watching an animal ad on TV might refuse to eat meat and an older youth might be educated about animal exploitation after watching a documentary in a university class. A first event is the direct interaction between an individual and their environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). Although Bronfenbrenner argues that changes in behaviour occur after repeated exposure to specific environmental influences over time, this instantaneous shift in thought can still occur (Forenza & Germak, 2015; Lowe & Ginsberg, 2002). In this study, it was expected that participants would report an emotionally salient first event as an influence on their early participation in animal rights activism.

Three of the six participants reported an event that occurred at a young age that influenced their early participation in the animal rights movement. Participants spoke about how these salient experiences illustrated their intense love and need to protect animals. For example, one participant stated that she experienced a lesson about the harm of racism in elementary school and wondered why this same message was not delivered to her classroom about the appropriate treatment of animals. Not only was this a defining moment in shaping her early engagement in the animal rights movement, but it was the realization that not everyone supported equal treatment of animals. Interestingly, two participants could recall that a shift in thought about animal rights occurred but could not disclose the shocking event. This may be because participants were asked to retrospectively recall a first event and the ability to remember fine details may be problematic. Or, contrary to past research, a shocking first event is not necessary to make people sympathetic to the animal rights cause.

Implications for this finding suggest that first events may influence early and continued participation in animal rights causes. Exposing children to poignant and emotionally salient information could provide access to differing beliefs and viewpoints and an alternate way of thinking about the world. It is unknown whether the reason some participants could not recall their specific first event was due to an issue with recollection or because a salient event is not enough to alter one's entire belief system. Future research should focus on a younger population because young children with an interest in animal rights can better speak to the specific incidence that shaped their early participation in the animal activist movement.

Empathy. Empathy is an important facet of human and non-human interaction as extant literature suggests a link between prosocial behaviours such as volunteering and empathic understanding (Andreoni & Vesterlund, 2001; Taylor & Signal, 2005; Von Fragstein et al., 2008). Studies show that important environmental influences shape a child's level of empathy for humans, animals, and the environment (Melson, 2014). Researchers understand that this correlation between empathy and interactions with humans, animals, and the environment has implications for future participation in animal rights activism (Furnham, McManus, & Scott, 2003; Galvin & Herzog, 1992, 1998; Melson, 2014; Shapiro, 1994; Tardif-Williams & Bosacki, 2015). Bronfenbrenner (1977) addressed the importance of environmental influences on individual characteristics such as empathy from a young age. Levels of empathy do not necessarily change, as personality constructs often tend to remain stable over time (Bollich, Hill, Harms, & Jackson, 2016); this suggests that for animal rights activists, empathy towards animal welfare is constant. In a study conducted on young adolescents, Bollich and colleagues (2016) found that moral reasoning and other emotional traits stayed consistent. In this study, it was expected that animal rights activists would be emotionally invested in the rights of animals. This empathetic response would be important to their early and continued participation in the animal rights movement.

Distally, four of the six participants reported being influenced by a strong empathetic reaction to protect the rights of animals in their early childhood; participants discussed experiencing strong negative affect for animal suffering. This empathetic response affected their consumptive choices and the purchasing of specific clothing (e.g., leather). However, consistent exposure to animal suffering and exploitation was described

as overwhelming and difficult to manage emotionally. Although participants' high levels of empathy were reported as an important influence for becoming engaged in the animal rights movement, it was simultaneously discussed as problematic.

Interestingly, and contrary to this study's expectation, five participants discussed a shift from an initial feeling of intense empathy to using logic and reasoning in their continued participation in animal rights. Two proximal reasons were given for the progression to increased logic and reasoning. Five participants discussed that the shift to a logical viewpoint was to benefit the movement; since participants used education to remain involved in the movement (see above), addressing current issues in a reasoned way allowed for a calm discussion about the benefits of animal rights to non-members. Two participants suggested that a logical approach was used to protect them from experiencing overwhelming emotional responses to the stimuli to which they are often exposed. The participants admitted that their high levels of empathy were, at times, problematic to their continued participation in the movement; developing a coping strategy was necessary to remain involved in the movement.

These findings indicate that how activists express their values and beliefs may change over time. In early childhood, high levels of empathy are beneficial when becoming involved in the animal rights movement. However, it is unknown whether this shift to a logical approach to activism among participants is to benefit the movement, to self-preserve and manage their emotional experiences, or both. Future research is needed to further examine why this latter shift occurs. Do animal rights activists apply an unemotional and logical reasoning as a strategy to mitigate the stress of immersion into the lifestyle or to self-motivate continued participation within the movement? Understanding

appropriate ways to confront and educate a non-member may make participants feel that they are making a positive contribution to the movement which, in turn, leads to continued participation.

Collective identity. Past research shows diverging findings on the importance of collective identity on successful participation in an activist cause (Bobel, 2007; Fominaya, 2010; Kieffer, 1984; Taylor & Whittier, 1992). Recall that a collective identity is a unity of a group's beliefs and can incorporate an animal activist identity (e.g., veganism identity, animal lover identity). Putnam (2000) revealed that an association with a collective identity leads to a creation of a social network where likeminded individuals with similar beliefs and values can affect change. For example, in St. Catharines, Ontario, Canada, a local vet was found to have beaten the animals in his practice while under anesthesia; what started as a small group of people with a similar goal unfolded into a protest that blocked roads and sidewalks (Walter, 2016). Taylor and Whittier (1992) argued that the main goal of collective identity is to oppose the dominant cultural practices, which is inherent in social movements that aim to counter culturally dominant lifestyles.

On the contrary, Bobel (2007) suggests that researchers should not just assume that participants claim the label "activist" and that there is a difference between "doing activism" and "being activist" (p. 149). It is argued that by "being activist", members associate with a collective identity that shares the values and beliefs of the group, whereas "doing activism" is attempting to create change without the associated labels. Social movement literature claims that being an activist is a collective identity that is linked to collective action (i.e., action taken by a group of people with a common objective; Rupp & Taylor, 1999). However, Bobel (2007) questions if this construction of a collective identity

even matters. In the current study, it was expected that animal rights participants would consider themselves a part of a community and develop a collective identity that is in line with the beliefs of the group and this community membership would be an important influence on early and continued participation in animal rights activism. However, past literature suggests that this latter link might not be so clear (Bobel, 2007). Therefore, it is possible that community membership was not influential for some animal rights participants and these participants might be less likely to report collective identity as important to their early and continued participation in animal rights activism.

In this study, all six of the animal rights participants self-identified as an activist and saw themselves as contributing to the activist cause. When participants were asked if they identified with a collective identity, all described the animal rights movement as a community with shared beliefs and values, but did not feel connected in a way that influenced their early and continued participation. Five of the six participants stated that a connection between themselves and the shared values of the movement was not an important influence because the actions of the group were appreciated more than the values of the group. Given past literature, this study suggests that older youth may not believe that they require sharing ties to a social network to create change and to influence their participation; they might believe that the beliefs and values of the group do not influence the movement's success (Bobel, 2007). Applying Bronfenbrenner's PPCT model, a feeling of belongingness that a community provides is a close environmental influence to which a young child is exposed. However, not relating to a collective identity did not hinder participants continued involvement in the movement nor did it negatively affect the movement's success. This may be due to two proposed reasons. First, problems

in the animal rights movement (discussed below) can cause movement members to feel uncomfortable and unwilling to associate with certain group members. Second, the finding in support of Bobel (2007) may reflect the retrospective nature of the study. Participants were not interviewed in early childhood when beliefs in support of the animal rights movement were beginning to develop, and participants may have identified with a collective identity during the transition to an activist lifestyle. Future research should interview young children as these beliefs are just developing.

The implication of the above finding is important for future research in social movements and the necessity of a collective identity on movement success and as an influence for early and continued participation within the movement. Older youth may no longer embrace a collective identity to feel supported and successful in the animal rights movement. Participants have access to a wealth of information on the internet and it is no longer necessary to hold small meetings in the confines of people's houses; activism is not as taboo as it once was, and because of this people are becoming involved in movements across the world. With the advent of social media, older youth may rely less on communicating with a small group of likeminded people; blogs, social media, and the internet provide access to people with similar beliefs all over the world.

Similarities and Differences in the Seven Distal and/or Proximal Factors Between Animal Rights and Dis/ability Rights Older Youth Activists: Main Findings.

A comparative interview piece was conducted between six animal rights and six dis/ability rights activists to explore three similarities and two differences in the seven distal and proximal themes supported in past studies as being important in shaping the personal life course of older youth toward becoming and remaining involved in activism.

Dis/ability rights members are advocating for equal rights to able-bodied people and are doing this by attempting to change the way institutions operate and for political change. In contrast, animal rights embody both linear and fluid aspects of Gusfield's model. Although the animal rights movement is political, in that it aims to change policy and law, it is ultimately concerned with the everyday values associated with promoting a lifestyle that shows the proper relationship between humans and animals. The following five themes emerged as important in the analysis and are discussed below: 1) First Event, 2) Parental Involvement, 3) Empathy, 4) Collective Identity, and 5) Gender.

First event. Like animal rights activists, three of the six dis/ability rights activists mentioned a distal first event that was personal and illustrated the inequality between able-bodied people and people with a dis/ability. However, unlike animal rights participants, the first event involved themselves or a close family member and instilled a different thought process about advocacy and the impact they could have doing advocacy work. For example, while three of the six dis/ability rights activist participants reported having a mental or physical disability, they also indicated that they were advocating for close family members and children. This demonstrated a difference in how animal rights and dis/ability rights activists are influenced to become involved. Unlike animal rights, dis/ability activists did not experience a shift in values and beliefs, rather dis/ability activists became aware of the impact they could have doing advocacy work.

The first event discussed by both activist groups differed in small but substantial ways. For animal rights activists, the first event was not directed at them personally, but occurred because of a violation of a moral belief. Dis/ability rights participants reported that first events were influenced by a diagnosis of a mental illness (for themselves or close

personal relationships) or through bullying experienced as a child. For example, one of the six dis/ability rights participants discussed that her early participation in the advocates for autism movement was because her child had been diagnosed with autism and she experienced problems finding support. Additionally, a second participant mentioned that after he had experienced a mental health crisis during university he applied for board positions to encourage change in policy.

This finding emphasized an important difference between human-based activist groups and post-citizenship groups. Participants in the dis/abilities movement did not experience a first event that violated a moral belief, instead a personal experience and willingness to become a voice for people undergoing similar struggles influenced their early participation. Interestingly, dis/ability rights activists did not justify why they participated in advocacy work; this could be because at its ideological core, advocating for human rights is thought to be an inherently self-evident goal.

Parental involvement. An important difference noted between animal and dis/ability rights activists was in the distal theme of parental involvement. As discussed above, two animal rights participants reported having unsupportive families and friends, especially at the beginning of their transition to a vegan lifestyle and diet. Conversely, the dis/ability rights members had overwhelming support when discussing their future involvement in advocacy work. It is important to note that there are people who believe that mental and physical disabilities are made-up phenomenon to receive sympathy or pity, however studies support the idea that dis/ability movements are globally accepted (Chandler, 2016; Winter, 2003). For example, if the family is supportive of the physical or mental disabilities of the participant or close family member, it is likely they would

support a political lifestyle to change current policy. The support discussed by the dis/ability participants was a way to feel heard and understood; families and friends were reported to be encouraging and supportive of the continued fight to change policy and beliefs about what dis/abled people can do. The added emotional support made the transition to becoming involved in political activism easier for all the participants.

Empathy. All animal rights and dis/ability rights participants reported having an empathetic response to their respective activist group. One of the six dis/ability rights participants discussed that being empathetic towards the cause was the only way the movement would be successful. Like animal rights activists, five of the six dis/ability rights activists were initially emotionally invested and participants reported (in their own words) feeling committed to the cause. When diagnosed with a mental or physical dis/ability, participants reported that although they were supportive of dis/ability rights, a diagnosis and the subsequent empathetic reaction fostered engagement in advocacy work. One of the six dis/ability rights participants discussed that while she was supportive of the movement, she did not become engaged in advocacy work until a close family member had been diagnosed with autism. Participants reported an emotional responsibility for being able to advocate for people who could not advocate for themselves.

Interestingly, all of the dis/ability rights activists in this study developed a logical approach to their activism in their continued participation in the movement. Participants reported that they were still empathetic to the cause and experienced intense emotion (e.g., upset, angry, happy), but when advocating to the public, a logical approach was needed to effectively persuade public policy and law. Dis/ability rights activists may understand that an argument that is constructed logically benefits the movement. For example, a well-

crafted argument to change public policy will help persuade policy makers about the importance of an amendment. However, when exploring the responses of the animal rights participants, dis/ability rights participants may also use a logical reasoning strategy to mitigate the stress associated with their advocacy work.

Collective Identity. In contrast to the animal rights members, all of the dis/ability rights activists reported that belongingness and feeling like a community was important for their successful early and continued participation. Interestingly, four of the six dis/ability rights participants identified themselves as an activist but they also reported not “doing enough”, despite doing advocacy work for several years. Unlike the animal rights participants who understood how important their contribution was to the animal rights message, these four participants believed that they were “just doing what I’m supposed to do”.

When discussing the movement itself, dis/ability participants discussed having similar goals and used each other as support. This finding highlights one potential reason the animal rights group is not unified; dis/ability groups tend to separate into smaller groups dedicated to one cause. However, the animal rights movement is an umbrella term with numerous members advocating for different things (i.e., ending of animal husbandry, ending captivity and breeding, advocating for stricter laws on animal abuse). This multiplicity of causes could lead to animosity between members of the animal rights movement when they perceive one issue to be more important than the other (i.e., illegal fishing is of greater importance than closing puppy mills). For the dis/ability rights group however, all participants believed that equal rights, awareness, and support for all dis/abilities was a necessary right. For example, one participant claimed that mental health

awareness was the biggest human rights issue left to face. For this participant and all dis/ability rights participants, mental health awareness was perceived to be the most important issue.

Gender. Similar to youth engaging in animal rights activism, four of the six youth engaged in dis/ability rights activism were women, which is consistent with past research that states that 70 – 100% of social activists are women (Jasper & Poulsen, 1995).

Participants of both groups further elaborated that gender norms and the social construction of masculinity might hinder early participation in a social activist movement among men due to a perceived fear of judgment or ridicule. One animal rights participant stated that gender norms must be broken to ensure that men become involved in social activism. One dis/ability rights participant suggested that women advocate for dis/ability awareness and changes to policy because it is their children who are affected. Caregiving is a gender norm, and it is statistically likely that women are the primary caregiver in the home. The suggestion that women rather than men engaged in dis/ability rights activism may not be due to a perceived fear of judgment or ridicule, but might be because, statistically, women care and advocate for their children while men support their families financially (Clarke, 2006).

Unexpected Themes in the Animal Rights Movement that Underscore Changes in Activism

Two unexpected but exciting themes emerged when analyzing the interviews conducted with the youth engaged in animal rights activism: 1) Problems with Movement, and 2) Intersectionality.

Problems with the animal rights movement. Participants were initially asked to share what encouraged their continued participation in the animal rights movement. Unexpectedly, all six participants discussed the persistent problems within the animal rights movement that acted as a distraction from the cause. Initially the question was meant to explore if participants felt a sense of collective identity; was participation in a group with common values and beliefs important for participants' early and continued participation in the animal rights movement? However, all animal rights participants emphasized the current issues and problems associated with the animal activist movement, and how these negatively influenced their continued participation in the movement. Four problems were discussed: 1) Privilege, 2) Hero mentality, 3) Elitism, and 4) Gender violence.

Privilege. The first issue three of the six animal rights participants in this study discussed was the feeling of privilege. Five of the six animal rights participants were white, and three of them spoke of the feeling of “white privilege”; white privilege is the understanding of the privilege you command in society because of the colour of your skin (Carr, 2015). The participants in this study were cognizant of their white privilege. Problems were reported to arise when participants in the animal rights group did not understand their own white privilege; other members in the club were marginalized and their voices silenced. For example, one participant discussed that members' inability to understand white privilege could negatively influence group meetings. This was a contentious argument for all participants who actively fought to allow marginalized persons an equal voice to ensure equal representation.

Elitism. An elitist perspective, specifically regarding veganism and the promotion of veganism, was reported by animal rights activists. All participants discussed that the pressure to go 100% vegan immediately was unreasonable, and participants disclosed that non-members interested in the group were shunned because they still consumed meat. Interestingly, none of the participants supported this position, and in fact, the animal rights activists discussed how the promotion of that belief is elitist at best, and racist, classist, and sexist at worst. All participants spoke about how certain members of the population were unable to adopt a 100% vegan lifestyle and that shaming them for that was problematic. For example, Inuit who have incredibly high food prices need to hunt to survive, or people with medical issues should not be made to feel bad because they cannot fully adopt a vegan lifestyle.

Hero mentality. Participants reported that some members of the animal rights group craved recognition for doing something noble or altruistic; this was considered as having a hero mentality. For two participants, these problematic members of the group undermined the movement's message and caused in-fighting among group members. This problem is exacerbated when sexism is considered in the animal rights movement. In this study, the female participants reported that men take a public role when promoting the movement to the general community. For example, three of the women noted that men were likely to get in front of the cameras and to be the ones that people talked to for comment. Additionally, three female participants said that women's voices were going unheard and, given that women make up a large majority of the members, the silencing of certain people's voices is extremely problematic for cohesive group functioning. This problem was severe enough for some participants that they were forced to take a step back

from remaining involved in community clubs because they felt their message was drowned out by male voices.

Gender violence. Shockingly, gender violence was a dominant theme that emerged while conducting the interviews with the animal rights members. Two women reported feeling uncomfortable because of a previous history of being harassed during community meetings. Two women felt that men were present at meetings and community protests to garner sympathy from women and to pursue them for sinister purposes. This theme was unexpected and while it is well documented that there are issues within the animal rights community, gender violence must immediately be addressed to keep the community strong and to keep its members safe. The implications of this finding are disastrous; people may feel uncomfortable participating if they fear potential harassment and perceive the leaders of the group to be overlooking the severity of the complaints. Future research should examine this problem in greater depth because participants need to be protected and exposing them to harassment not only harms the movement and what it stands for, but also inexorably harms the participants themselves. These subthemes outline the reasons why participants have difficulty continuing their participation in the animal rights movement.

Intersectionality. Intersectionality is the study of connecting social identities and their related systems of domination, oppression, and/or discrimination (Clark, 2015). It would make sense that these underlying systems of oppression and discrimination would transcend the animal-human distinction in a way that participants practicing animal rights advocacy would also support equality for other human rights causes. Participants discussed this need for intersectionality to bridge the rights of many humans (i.e.,

slaughterhouse workers, women, poor farmers) with the plight animals endure daily. For example, when animals are grown for food, acres of land (generally bought from poor farmers) are used to grow food to feed the animals that will eventually be slaughtered. In this process, farmers and slaughterhouse workers are marginalized due to lack of support and money, and women are oppressed because women from impoverished cities work for meagre wages in slaughterhouses and clothing factories. This example elucidates how women, impoverished people, farmers, the environment, and animal suffering are all interconnected.

Therefore, it is impossible to separate animal exploitation from a multitude of other human and global rights issues. Participants used this information to discuss how in modern times access to media is constant, and understanding both human and animal issues are vital to the animal rights movement. One problem cannot exist without the other and animal rights participants in this study highlighted the current global perspective that many young activists today use as a tool to remain involved in the movement. The fluid nature of their activism, and activists' ability to fight for many interrelated issues at once, is the catalyst for this suggested global citizenship perspective.

Global Citizenship Movement. Although not explicitly discussed in the interviews, the participants' responses focused on the importance of animal rights, and how animal exploitation affects other oppressed groups of people. In the interviews, all animal rights and dis/ability rights participants were asked if they believed animal and human-rights issues were linked. Surprisingly, all twelve of the participants reported that they believed this to be true. In the findings above, the distal and proximal factors that influenced early and continued participation in animal and dis/ability rights activism were in line with those

identified in previous research studies, and suggested that activist groups no longer advocate for only the rights of a certain marginalized and oppressed group. This finding suggests that activism may be shifting towards an intersectional approach; environmental and personal influences, in association with global issues being discussed on TV and in schools, supports the global citizenship theory discussed below.

A global citizen is one who helps take responsibility for global issues that affect the world daily. They consider themselves to be part of a world community and their actions directly influence the building of a global community and their beliefs and values (Dower & Williams, 2002). This ideology was reported several times during the interviews conducted with the animal rights participants; all participants discussed the need for intersectionality. There was constant reference to a need to move away from the single-issue problem; they justified this reasoning by saying that there is not one issue that does not directly impact another. Therefore, researchers need to move away from understanding activism in terms of single issue problems and look toward understanding young people's activism through a global lens. Even 10 years ago this phenomenon was not observed (e.g., Pallotta, 2005) and it is apparent that the way the world is changing is having a direct impact on the influences that older youth experience to become and remain involved in activism. Exploring this further may help to explain and promote a global citizenship perspective, whereby global issues are linked to local issues and people can begin to collaborate about the issues.

Limitations and Future Research

This qualitative research study draws on Bronfenbrenner's PPCT model to explore seven distal and proximal factors thought to be important in shaping young people's life

course toward becoming and remaining involved in the animal rights movement. Further, this research study explored the potential similarities and differences in influences between youth who participate in animal rights activism and youth who participate in dis/ability rights activism. This comparative lens provides a unique contribution to the literature as, to date and to the author's knowledge, these two important social movement groups have not been explored comparatively. What initially encourages a person to become involved in activism may be similar or different to what keeps them motivated to remain involved. Further, these influences may differ drastically depending on which social movement group is being examined. However, as with all research, this study has some limitations and offers some suggestions for future research.

The first limitation of this study was the age of the participants. Unfortunately, due to scheduling and when recruitment took place, younger participants were studying for exams or had gone home for the summer. Due to this timing, participants aged 22 – 30 years were recruited for the study. While this age range still falls within the period considered “youth”, future research should examine participants who are even younger (e.g., ages 14 – 20 years). Younger adolescents are in a transition period between early childhood and adulthood, and it is likely that their memories of those factors associated with their early involvement in social activism are still fresh in their minds and can be reported with greater accuracy and detail.

Another limitation to the study was the number of participants. Again, unfortunately due to time constraints, the target number of 20 – 30 participants was not reached. While a total of 12 participants is sufficient for qualitative research that examines exploratory themes, having a larger participant number may help with fully understanding

some of the factors influencing young people to become involved in animal rights activism. Also, recruitment of men would be beneficial as understanding their unique perspectives, rather than speculating, may provide insight as to why men do not participate in the movement and help to examine some of the problems in the movement in regards to gender violence and the “*hero mentality*”. Future research should attempt to address these problems and speak to young men who can provide an accurate account about why they often participate less in animal rights activism.

Sampling is the third limitation experienced in this study. Thankfully participants were recruited from around the greater Toronto area region and therefore were not limited to the Niagara region. Given this, it is still important to see if a shift to an intersectional approach that was seen in this study is supported in different areas of Canada, and the world, and to examine the reasons why or why not. Another issue with sampling was that many of the participants were recruited from the same groups and clubs, and the viewpoints discussed in the study may be indicative of the beliefs and values of those groups. Future research should explore different animal activist groups, as well as engaging other advocacy groups to compare the animal rights group to other human rights-based groups. Examining different animal activist groups may shed light on whether the intersectionality finding is consistent across multiple animal rights groups, or if animal activist groups in this geographical area have been influenced (i.e., through education, environmental specificities of the area) in a way that makes these groups unique. Further, examining other human rights-based groups (i.e., LGBTQ, anti-war groups) would be useful to determine if the differences found in this study between groups is a consistent finding.

The final limitation of this study involves the method that was used. Qualitative methods are useful for exploring themes and understanding the personal perspectives of the participants. However, utilizing some form of quantitative method (i.e., questionnaires, quantifying the coding, etc.) would have allowed the findings to be supported by quantitative results as well. Since qualitative research is often very subjective, whereby different people may interpret the data differently, it is imperative that future research is conducted using quantitative methods to validate this study's findings.

Implications.

The implications of this study are important for social movement research for the following four reasons: 1) Importance of early influences and their practical implications, 2) Educational implications for engaging older youth in meaningful activism, 3) Understanding differences and similarities in human and post-citizenship movements, and 4) Utilizing an intersectional approach to activism. These implications are discussed below and suggestions for future research are offered.

Importance of early influences and practical implications. The seven factors explored in this study and discussed in past research highlight the importance of early environmental (e.g., education, parental involvement, lifestyle, first event, collective identity) and personal influences (e.g., gender, empathy) on future participation in animal activism. Further, six of the seven factors (excluding collective identity) are conceptualized within Bronfenbrenner's "microsystem" (1977), which includes the significant relationship between the individual and the environment and considers the unique setting in which the individual is engaged. In this way, these early influences can help to educate and inform young children about the world around them and can serve to

shape their beliefs and behaviours related to animal welfare. For some youth, influences such as a supportive family environment and experiencing a salient first event at an early age can shape their life course towards participation in animal rights activism. For young animal rights advocates, early influences are critical when altering a lifestyle to one that is consistent with the values often espoused by animal rights activists (i.e., veganism/vegetarianism). For example, two participants in this study discussed that the transition to a vegan diet was easier when parents were supportive of their decision. It is likely that children who wish to transition to a vegan diet would have greater success if their parents and social network are supportive of the change. For animal rights activists, parents may have a larger influential role, as transitions to a different diet and support for a non-human cause can be sabotaged by unsupportive parents. Unfortunately, there is a relative paucity of research that explores the role of parents on a child's future participation in animal rights activism; however, there are well documented links between parental attitudes toward school, education, and even corporal punishment on a child's future success in life. (Bronfenbrenner, 1986; McGillicuddy-DeLisi, 1992; Taylor, Clayton, & Rowley, 2004). Research that examines the role of parents on future engagement in activism among youth is needed to help explore these relationships further.

Educational implications for engaging older youth in meaningful activism. In addition to early influences, there are educational implications for engaging older youth in meaningful activism. All participants reported the important influence of education on becoming and remaining involved in activism. The foundations for later activism may begin in early childhood and education at the university and high school level should not be overlooked as an important influence for engaging older youth in activism. Educators at

the primary and secondary level should discuss important global issues in the classroom to raise awareness and to promote meaningful discussion. Older youth without previous experience in activism may become interested in participating if they are provided an opportunity to learn about activism through discussions with professors and through course choices. Further research is needed to determine the overall effectiveness of educational programs aim at promoting interest and participation in various forms of social activism among youth.

Understanding differences and similarities in human and post-citizenship movements. To date, and to the researcher's knowledge, a comparative study of the factors influencing older youth participation in animal and dis/ability rights activism has not been explored. This area of research is highly underdeveloped, and therefore no specific findings were anticipated a priori; rather the data analysis was completely exploratory.

The findings in this comparative section that explores both animal rights and dis/ability rights activists support five of the seven factors shown in previous research as being important in shaping both early and continued participation in social activism. Interestingly, both similarities and differences were revealed in this study's findings, with collective identity and parental involvement illustrating the uniqueness of each activist movement and gender, education, empathy, and experiencing a first event suggesting that certain environmental influences may be common between each activist movement. Future research should explore different social activist movements in the context of each other. Movements that are considered human rights movements and/or post-citizenship movements show uniqueness between groups.

It would be interesting to study whether the similarities between groups are indicative of a global shift in how activism is conducted. To some extent, every activist group and their members will report similarities and differences in the factors shaping their personal life course for becoming and remaining involved in activism. However, the findings of this study highlight that a global shift in thought may be occurring. All twelve of the participants in this study, despite advocating for one specific cause, stated that they understood the important work of other activist groups. Understanding these environmental influences will contribute to the existing social movement literature, and can suggest that participation in activism among older youth may be fostered by early exposure to global issues through a child's education, lifestyle, and a supportive family environment.

Utilizing an intersectional approach to activism. The findings from past research studies highlight the importance of a collective activist identity and associating with a group of likeminded individuals for becoming and remaining an activist; this feeling of belongingness and support positively influences participation in activism among older youth. However, this study's findings suggest that for animal rights activists a feeling of collective identity might not be as critical. In this study, all of the six animal rights participants were not interested in the values and beliefs of the collective group; in contrast, all of the participants discussed movement success and an intersectional approach as being more important to their participation in activism.

The importance of intersectionality is a key finding of this study, and this finding suggests a shift in the way that older youth participate in activism. The animal rights participants reported that an intersectional approach to activism was the very reason they

participated in the movement; they said that this approach links multiple systems of oppression into one cause. It is interesting to note that the animal rights participants discussed this theme only, and the dis/ability rights participants understood that animal and human rights were linked but they did not see them as being “equal” in nature. On the other hand, the animal rights activists found it hard to differentiate animal and human rights and cited intersectionality as a philosophy that all activists should espouse. It is unclear why only the animal rights activists discussed the importance of intersectionality in defining their participation in activism. Further research is needed to explore the important role of intersectionality in shaping the personal life course toward becoming and remaining a social activism among older youth.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study contributed to the social movement literature and offers two strengths. First, the application of Bronfenbrenner’s theory can allow for a unique contribution by helping researchers explain that at different times throughout the lifespan, influences that affect the decision to become and remain an activist can change or remain consistent. Second, a comparative lens provides a unique contribution to the literature as, to date and to the author’s knowledge, animal and dis/ability rights groups have not been looked at comparatively. Understanding these environmental influences will contribute to the existing social movement literature, and can suggest that participation in activism among older youth may be fostered by early exposure to global issues through a child’s education, lifestyle, and a supportive family environment.

Drawing on past research findings, this qualitative research study explored seven early childhood (i.e., distal) and current (i.e., proximal) factors self-reported by older

youth as being important in shaping their personal life course toward becoming and remaining involved in the animal rights movement, and these included: 1) education, 2) gender, 3) lifestyle, 4) parental involvement, 5) first event, 6) empathy, and 7) collective identity. In-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with six animal rights activists and six dis/ability rights activists ranging in age from 18 – 30 years.

Bronfenbrenner's PPCT model was applied to understand some of early lifespan factors influencing youth to become and remain engaged in the animal rights movement. Distally, participants reported that education, gender, first events, parental involvement, lifestyle, and empathy were significant factors related to becoming an animal rights activist.

Proximally, participants reported that education, lifestyle, empathy, and collective identity were significant factors related to remaining an animal rights activist. Additionally, the following six themes were selected for analysis and comparison that addressed the influences associated with animal and dis/ability rights activists' participation in social movement: collective identity, first event, parental involvement, empathy, gender, and education. Unexpected themes were also revealed that help to explain some of the current challenges (i.e., problems with the movement) and benefits (i.e., intersectionality) that participants experience in the animal rights movement. Animal rights activists' use of an intersectional approach shows the fluid nature of animal rights activism. For example, animal rights participants reported that they adopt a global citizenship perspective whereby they do not believe in single issues, but rather that they believe that all issues are important and worth advocating for.

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Appendix A

1. How did you become involved in activism/advocacy? Was there a specific time you recall that influenced your decision to become involved?
2. How did you learn about the cause and decide to become involved?
3. Did you always have a long-standing interest in activism or was your family involved in activism for anything when you were growing up?
4. How often do you think about activism/advocacy?
5. How do you participate in your activist movement?
6. Do you feel that social movement is a good form of activism/advocacy?
7. What about the movement makes you want to keep participating in it?
8. What about your activist group makes you want to stay involved?
9. Are you comfortable being out about your activism/advocacy? Is your activism/advocacy lifestyle something you share freely with other people? Was there ever a time you did not feel comfortable declaring yourself an activist?
10. (Follow) Have you felt that your activism has affected your personal life with friends or a romantic interest?
11. Why do you stay involved?
12. Are you emotionally affected at all by your participation in the movement?
13. Do you see animal issues and human issues as being related to each other?
14. What is your take on sex and gender within the movement?
15. Why do you think there are not more young men engaged in animal activism?

Appendix B

Distal Factors

- Education
- Gender
- First event
- Parental involvement
- Lifestyle
- Empathy

Proximal Factors

- Education
- Lifestyle
- Empathy
- Collective identity

Similar and Different Themes Between Groups:

- Collective Identity
- First Event
- Parental Involvement
- Empathy and Prosociality
- Gender

Unexpected Themes:

- Problems with movement
- Intersectionality

Appendix C



Brock University
Research Ethics Office
Tel: 905-688-5550 ext. 3035
Email: reb@brocku.ca

Social Science Research Ethics Board

Certificate of Ethics Clearance for Human Participant Research

DATE: 2/24/2016

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: TARDIF-WILLIAMS, Christine - Child and Youth Studies

CO-INVESTIGATOR(S): Kia Matthews

FILE: 15-209 - TARDIF-WILLIAMS

TYPE: Masters Thesis/Project STUDENT: Corrie Aldhelm-White
SUPERVISOR: Dr. Christine Tardif-Williams

TITLE: Exploring the Precipitating Factors Associated with the Decision to Engage in Animal Activism among Older Youth

ETHICS CLEARANCE GRANTED

Type of Clearance: NEW

Expiry Date: 2/28/2017

The Brock University Social Science Research Ethics Board has reviewed the above named research proposal and considers the procedures, as described by the applicant, to conform to the University's ethical standards and the Tri-Council Policy Statement. Clearance granted from 2/24/2016 to 2/28/2017.

The Tri-Council Policy Statement requires that ongoing research be monitored by, at a minimum, an annual report. Should your project extend beyond the expiry date, you are required to submit a Renewal form before 2/28/2017. Continued clearance is contingent on timely submission of reports.

To comply with the Tri-Council Policy Statement, you must also submit a final report upon completion of your project. All report forms can be found on the Research Ethics web page at <http://www.brocku.ca/research/policies-and-forms/research-forms>

In addition, throughout your research, you must report promptly to the REB:

- a) Changes increasing the risk to the participant(s) and/or affecting significantly the conduct of the study;
- b) All adverse and/or unanticipated experiences or events that may have real or potential unfavourable implications for participants;
- c) New information that may adversely affect the safety of the participants or the conduct of the study;
- d) Any changes in your source of funding or new funding to a previously unfunded project.

We wish you success with your research.

Approved:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "K Maich", written over a horizontal line.

Kimberly Maich, Chair
Social Science Research Ethics Board

Note: Brock University is accountable for the research carried out in its own jurisdiction or under its auspices and may refuse certain research even though the REB has found it ethically acceptable.

If research participants are in the care of a health facility, at a school, or other institution or community organization, it is the responsibility of the Principal Investigator to ensure that the ethical guidelines and clearance of those facilities or institutions are obtained and filed with the REB prior to the initiation of research at that site.